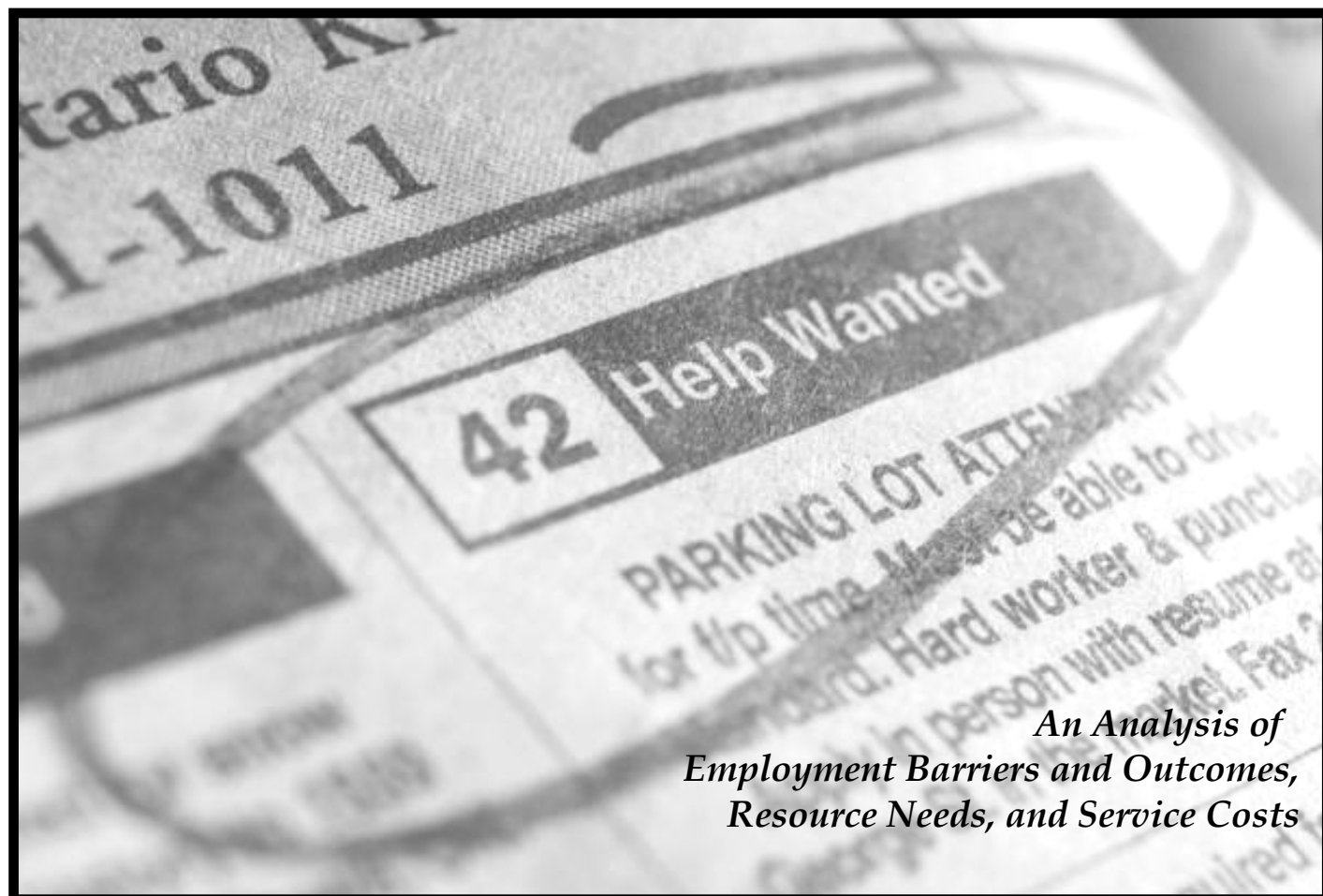


# Help Wanted:

## Low-Income Single Adult Job Seekers and the Programs Serving Them



A Mid-America Institute on Poverty  
Research and Policy Report

May 2001



# Mid-America Institute on Poverty

Heartland Alliance's Mid-America Institute on Poverty (MAIP) serves as a catalyst for the amelioration and eradication of poverty and disadvantage. The Institute prioritizes improving access to quality and affordable health care, housing and human services as a means of promoting human rights.

MAIP's strategies are rooted in:

- o Stakeholder involvement in problem identification and the development and implementation of solutions;
- o Practice-based research and action-oriented analysis and policy development;
- o Diverse collaborations and partnerships to provide full information, a variety of perspectives and whenever possible, consensus implementation;
- o Evaluation toward ever-more effective services and policies; and
- o Heartland Alliance's mission of providing for the human needs and advancing the human rights of impoverished, endangered and isolated populations (particularly the very poor, the homeless and new immigrants).



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# Executive Summary

The *Help Wanted: Low-Income Single Adult Job Seekers and the Programs Serving Them* report details findings from a two-year study of single adult job seekers (including non-custodial parents) with multiple barriers to obtaining and/or retaining employment and the programs that provide employment services to them. The intent of this project is to fill the research gap on single adult and non-custodial parent job seekers who are ineligible for government cash assistance but who have had difficulty in maintaining employment.

Data were collected from program interviews and observations, and from in-depth, one-on-one interviews with 146 job seekers at program entry. In addition, one-third of these job seekers were interviewed again at a 6 to 12 month follow-up.

## Key Findings:

The profile of a typical job seeker who completed an initial interview is a 40 year-old African American male who has a GED or high school diploma. He has a criminal record as well as a history of substance use. He has no income whatsoever and does not receive food stamps. He is unemployed but has worked within the past two years and resides in a temporary shelter.

### *Job Seeker Characteristics and Employment Barriers*

- The job seekers interviewed have many assets related to employment. The majority have a GED or High School diploma, nearly all have worked in the past and in particular within the past two years, and most have engaged in job training.
- Despite these strengths, they were facing a high number of barriers to obtaining and/or retaining employment. The vast majority has a combination of three or more barriers.
- The job seekers reported facing the following barriers to employment: unstable housing (81%), substance use (73%), insufficient work history (64%), and having a criminal record (61%). Other barriers identified were transportation issues, lack of job skills, low literacy and poor health.
- Job seekers who had more barriers were less likely to be employed, earned less, and were more likely to experience job instability than those who had fewer barriers.

### *Job Seeker Service Utilization and Needs*

- On average, the job seekers utilized a varied service package comprised of six services. Services most utilized were job readiness classes, case management, job placement services and housing provision or referrals.
- The services and supports that the job seekers reported as being most helpful for their employment efforts were job readiness classes, case management, job placement services, housing provision or referrals and transportation assistance.
- The services that they were most in need of at the time of the follow-up interview were job placement services, housing assistance, health care, job training and education.
- At the time of the initial interview the average cost of services utilized was \$1,280. At follow-up the average cost of services utilized was \$679.



### *Employment and Self-Sufficiency Outcomes*

- While 69 percent of job seekers interviewed both at program entry and after program completion had no income including food stamps at program entry, only 18 percent had no income at the time of the follow-up interview.
- Job seekers who were interviewed after receiving employment services experienced a 183 percent increase on average in their monthly income from program entry.
- This income, however, was not enough to cover their basic needs. The average monthly income was \$545 without food stamps, and \$598 with food stamps.
- The amount of monthly employment earnings was significantly negatively correlated with several specific barriers to employment, including mental health problems, and poor overall health.

***This multi-barriered population is not likely to become self-supporting on wage income alone.***

Yet those single adults with earned income do not qualify for or are unable to obtain supportive services and benefits sufficient to allow them to maintain employment. Targeted assistance to very low income working single adults is needed to facilitate their progress toward self-support. The comprehensive policy and program recommendations follow can enhance employment outcomes and self-sufficiency for this group of job seekers.

#### **CONCLUSION 1: Flexible services are key to success.**

- ◆ *Invest in the development of effective new and expanded program models using the existing programs as a guide.*

#### **CONCLUSION 2: Safety net and workforce development policies are limited and limiting.**

- ◆ *A combination of services and income support should be provided during the period of time in which individuals are engaging in job search, skills development and barrier reduction activities.*
- ◆ *Employment programs and funders should allow time for assessment, interventions based on that assessment and make provisions for those who require long-term programming.*
- ◆ *Programs and government agencies need to ensure that low-income individuals are linked to the benefits that they are eligible for, including food*

*stamps, Transitional Assistance, the Earned Income Tax Credit and SSI.*

- ◆ *A safety net system apart from the homeless service system needs to be in place to support those job seekers who are unable to secure employment.*

#### **CONCLUSION 3: Inappropriate performance standards exist**

- ◆ *Federal and state agencies that fund training should establish more flexible performance measures that include interim measurements for programs working with job seekers with multiple employment barriers.*

#### **CONCLUSION 4: Affordable housing, health care and transportation access are essentials**

##### ***Housing:***

- ◆ *More permanent affordable units need to be built or set-aside in Chicago.*

- ◆ *More supportive housing units should be created that target and assist single adults with multiple barriers to employment.*
- ◆ *The Homelessness Prevention Program funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services should be expanded.*
- ◆ *The federal minimum wage should be increased and indexed to inflation and consideration should be given to making it a living wage.*

#### **Transportation:**

- ◆ *Funding should be made available to workforce development and social service agencies so they can distribute transit fare.*
- ◆ *A coordinated public transportation fare system should be created in addition to an increase in connection points between the CTA, PACE and Metra systems.*
- ◆ *A transportation funding source that can be used innovatively by a broad range of players should be created at the state level to help increase access to job centers.*

#### **Health Care:**

- ◆ *The state of Illinois, in conjunction with the federal government, should offer expanded coverage through the Medicaid program.*
- ◆ *The Illinois General Assembly should consider legislation to assist small businesses that cannot afford coverage for their employees in offering health insurance.*

#### **CONCLUSION 5: Food stamps are pivotal**

- ◆ *Congress should restore the full food stamp entitlement to able-bodied adults without dependents.*
- ◆ *The state of Illinois should develop a comprehensive training program utilizing the federal and state Food Stamp Employment and Training Program dollars that is targeted at low-income single adults with multiple employment barriers.*

#### **CONCLUSION 5: Service and systems integration is currently lacking.**

- ◆ *Flexible funding sources need to be established as they are a necessity for programs serving multi-barriered job seekers.*
- ◆ *Connections should be facilitated between substance abuse treatment providers, corrections departments, community based organizations and community colleges to provide job readiness classes and linkages to training and education.*

#### **CONCLUSION 7: Criminal justice and the substance abuse treatment systems need enhancement.**

##### **Criminal Justice System:**

- ◆ *Drug and alcohol treatment should be available to all prisoners who need it.*
- ◆ *The state of Illinois and local governments should increase alternatives to incarceration, utilizing diversion programs and drug courts and modifying mandatory sentencing laws.*
- ◆ *The Illinois Department of Corrections, in conjunction with city and state human services providers should provide comprehensive pre-release planning and aftercare services.*

##### **Treatment System:**

- ◆ *The front end of the substance abuse treatment continuum should be expanded to include harm reduction.*
- ◆ *The back end of the treatment continuum should be expanded to include provision for housing*

#### **CONCLUSION 8: Multi-barriered non-custodial parents have limited capacity to pay child support.**

- ◆ *Child support enforcement agencies should develop a system to make child support orders more reflective of the circumstances of non-custodial parents.*
- ◆ *The eligibility of non-custodial parents for services using TANF funds and any new related funding should be revised.*



# Introduction

This past decade, the longest unbroken economic boom in U.S. history has challenged some of our assumptions about employment. While Americans have always valued work, there were certain populations to whom we were willing to provide support with the belief that employment was not, for them, a viable option, or at least not viable in terms of earning an income sufficient to meet their basic needs. Those people included single parents with young children, persons with mild to moderate disabilities, persons with addictions related disabilities, and older adults. Now in this era of unprecedented economic growth, policy makers have challenged the assumption that those populations should not be expected to maintain paid employment as a means of self support.

Over the last ten years, the trend has been to eliminate or scale back public benefits programs that provided support to people who were not working or able to meet their needs solely through employment income. In 1991, the state of Illinois replaced its General Assistance (GA) program, which provided cash assistance to impoverished single adults and non-custodial parents, many of whom were mildly or moderately disabled, with a Transitional Assistance (TA) program that reduced benefits and set a short time limit on receipt of benefits.

In 1992 over 80,000 persons were cut from the TA program and the payment amount for those remaining on TA was reduced from \$165 to \$154 per month (Hauser, 1994). Many of those previously eligible for GA and TA were found eligible for a federal program, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), based on the presence of a disability.

But in 1996, Congress passed legislation ending federal disability payments to 200,000 Americans with drug and alcohol addictions-related disabilities. In Cook County, Illinois alone, more than 15,000 were affected, and many of those cut off were former GA and TA recipients (Mason, 1998).

Also in 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) establishing time limits for receipt of cash assistance and work requirements for families who are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Recipients now have a lifetime 60-month time limit for receiving federal cash assistance and are required to work or to participate in work related activities for a prescribed number of hours per week.

The elimination of safety net supports for these low-income populations has placed their chances for self-sufficiency solely on their success in the job market. What the job market does not address, however, are the complicated barriers to employment that led many of these low-income job seekers to cash assistance programs in the past. This raises questions about how this population will fare under policies requiring self support and what policy interventions might be most effective in supporting multi-barriered populations in an employment focused context. While this information is currently trickling in regarding former TANF recipients, there is a dearth of information on single adults and non-custodial parents. In response, we launched the *Help Wanted: Low-Income Single Adult Job*

*Seekers and the Programs Serving Them* research project.

There has been a recent proliferation of literature focused on TANF recipients with barriers to employment and recipients are considered ‘hard to employ’<sup>1</sup>. *Help Wanted* focuses on those single adults and non-custodial parents who are not eligible for public assistance and who fit the general definition of ‘hard to employ’, minus the long-term welfare receipt clause. It is an attempt to fill the gap in research regarding single adult/non-custodial parent job seekers with multiple employment barriers.

The *Help Wanted* project consists of data on job readiness programs and their participants, most of whom face multiple barriers that interfere with obtaining or retaining employment. After interviewing a variety of employment service providers serving multi-barriered job seekers, we selected five programs in Chicago that, while serving geographically diverse populations, have at their core similar program elements. These include a focus on job seekers with significant barriers to employment (e.g., substance abuse, unstable housing, low skill levels, criminal records, and sporadic work histories) and a model of service delivery that includes job readiness training, job placement counseling, and a variety of social service supports.

A wide range of data are presented in this report on the single adult, multi-barriered

job seeking population, including demographics, barriers and employment outcomes; on the programs serving them; and on the cost of providing services and supports to this population. Data were collected from interviews with and observations of programs, and from in-depth one-on-one interviews with 146 job seekers at program entry and with one-third of them again 6 to 12 months after the initial interview, after they had received employment services. We use this interview and observational data to:

- profile job readiness programs working with this population;
- better understand low-income job seekers facing many barriers to obtaining or retaining employment, including their assets, needs, job histories and specific employment barriers;
- examine employment outcomes for these single adults and non-custodial parents;
- assess the costs of the package of services utilized by this population; and
- develop policy recommendations for improving services for job seekers with many barriers to employment.

This report will be useful for employment services providers who want to better understand the population with whom they are working and their program outcomes; for policy makers who wish to understand the current state of employment services, areas of growing need, and related policy changes; and for advocates working to improve existing human service and workforce development systems.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 ‘hard to employ’ was defined for the Welfare to Work program as long-term TANF recipients who meet two of three specified barriers to employment (no high school diploma, poor work history or require substance abuse treatment for employment) and/or non-custodial parents who have these barriers and whose children are long-term TANF recipients.

# Research Methodology

## Program selection

Organizations were selected based on the following criteria, which were developed from a review of workforce development literature and current policies:

- *Provision of employment services:* we identified agencies that provide job readiness, job search and retention services to low-skilled single adults or non-custodial parents.
- *Geographic diversity:* employment outcomes are dependent on economic contexts. In addition, geographic location affects factors such as access to transportation and other ancillary services. Also, policymaking is affected by the geographic distribution of constituents and the scope of their needs. Programs spread geographically across the city of Chicago were targeted for this study.
- *A significant number of job seekers facing many barriers to obtaining or retaining employment:* because the project was time constrained, we needed to identify organizations with a significant number of multi-barriered job seekers in their caseloads so that we could efficiently collect the volume of data needed for analysis and discussion.
- *Organizational diversity:* we recognized that different types of organizations may have different service philosophies, service models and implementation methods. Because these factors may affect outcomes and reflect the current standards of practice, it was important to select sites with a variety of

organizational models, so that we could better represent the current array of services for job seekers facing many barriers to employment.

- *Ability and willingness of programs to participate in the study:* six programs were selected based on the above criteria and five of them accepted our invitation to participate.

## The Sample

The goal was to interview up to 50 program participants at each agency for a total of 150 initial interviews. During implementation we found we had to over-sample at three programs, as one of the two other programs had a very small participant base and a second program closed down before our data collection was complete.

All able-bodied adults without dependents and non-custodial parents participating in job readiness programs were eligible for the study. At most program sites, MAIP staff presented the study during a job readiness class or event and the job seekers voluntarily signed up to be interviewed. The staff of a few organizations also personally invited their participants to take part in the study. Nearly all (approximately 98%) of those invited to participate accepted the invitation. A few people dropped out between signing up and the initial interview. Initial interviews were completed with newly enrolled participants at all of the sites until we nearly reached our goal. We succeeded in acquiring 146 initial interviews over a twelve-month period.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with a smaller group of job seekers. The ideal

length of time between initial and follow-up interviews was 12 months. The job seekers were expected to have completed the employment services portion of their programs and to have secured employment. We were concerned that if we set too long a time period between interviews we would not be able to find the respondents again, so we set six months as our realistic target. In the end, the average length of time between the initial and follow-up interview was seven months. While the goal was to reach 75 job seekers (50%) in the follow-up phase of the study, we were only able to reach 49 (34%) of them for a follow-up interview. The group of job seekers who completed both initial and follow-up interviews will be referred to as the “longitudinal sample” throughout this report.

### **Data Collection**

Several types of data were collected from the programs, their staff and from job seekers enrolled in the programs. Trained social workers and social work interns collected the data.

*Job seeker demographic information, job history, barriers to employment and services and support utilized were measured through:*

- initial job seeker interviews. These interviews were conducted in person at the program site or the job seekers’ housing site. After the job seekers were briefed on the study, they signed an informed consent form and a release of information prior to being interviewed. The interviews were confidential. They lasted an average of 30 minutes. One hundred and forty-six interviews were completed. These initial interviews took place between September 1999 and September 2000.
- interviews with program staff regarding services offered by program

*Costs of services and supports were measured through:*

- time tracking of employment program staff to understand the breakdown of services rendered. This data allowed for analysis of service operations and staffing, and specifically, a picture of the apportionment of employment specialists’ time. Key employment service staff at two organizations where we completed the majority of the interviews filled out detailed daily time records for approximately four consecutive weeks.
- budgets of the three participating organizations where we completed the largest number of interviews. For in-house program services, we used the program budget and the client caseloads to determine costs per participant and, where appropriate, units of service.
- cost estimates of other types of services that job seekers were using outside of the job readiness program. We sampled at least two providers of each service type. Programs were identified through the job seeker interviews and through staff research. Costing figures were calculated and averaged from annual reports or from figures supplied by the programs.

*Job seeker outcome data were collected through:*

- follow-up interviews with one-third of the job seekers approximately six to twelve months after the initial interview. These were conducted both in person and over the telephone. They took place from March 2000 through January 2001. The primary reasons for the low response rate for these interviews were that many of the job seekers did not respond to letters, many could not be

contacted due to a lack of telephone service or disconnected service, and many moved between initial and follow-up interviews and could not be located.

### **Limitations of the Study:**

*Selection bias due to self-selection by respondents:* Because we did not use a random sample methodology, this sample may not be representative of the entire population of single adult/non-custodial parents with multiple barriers to employment. We captured only a subset of people who have multiple barriers to employment: those actively participating in job readiness programs. This population subset is likely to be both worse off and better off than other members of the hard-to-employ population. On the one hand, those who are involved in such activities have either articulated an interest in becoming employed and have taken action toward that goal or are receiving assistance such as housing or case management that requires such job readiness preparation. This level of initiative probably puts them on better footing than other individuals with multiple employment barriers, particularly those who are jobless. On the other hand, many people with multiple barriers to employment may be working, and are therefore unlikely to enroll in a job readiness program. This group may face fewer or less severe barriers than the job seekers in our study. Therefore, our sample may be worse-off, overall, than the general population of single adults with multiple barriers to employment. Unfortunately, we do not know in what ways these groups differ in terms of specific barriers to employment, demographics or other factors. Some clues regarding the

differences among these groups is provided in **Appendix A**, which shows the demographics, employment status, and certain barriers to employment of this sample as compared to a sample of poor non-custodial parents, food stamp leavers, low income able-bodied adults and single homeless clients.

*Additional selection bias:* In order to adjust for our inability to sample randomly, we drew job seekers from a variety of job readiness programs located in geographically diverse areas of Chicago. While this method helps to create a more well rounded sample, it is problematic in that it allows for selection bias on the part of the programs who target certain populations and population subsets, missing others who may be in need of services but are not targeted or who are unaware of service availability.

*The follow-up time frame for the longitudinal sample was inadequate to measure change over an extended period of time:* We faced two constraints in collecting the follow-up interviews that shortened the time frame. First, the duration of the study was necessarily limited. Second, as most of our initial interviews were with respondents whose housing was short-term or unstable, we were concerned that if we set too long a time period between interviews we would not be able to find the respondents again.

*Statistical significance caveat:* In the report the statistical significance of some findings is indicated. The concept of significance here applies only to the sample we interviewed and not to the single adult job seeker population as a whole.





# Program Models

As in nearly every other industry, there is a stratification of populations served by employment-focused programs. Some programs target relatively high functioning employees looking to upgrade their current skills and move ahead in their career paths. Others target those who need specific technical or industry training in order to become proficient in new and current technologies. Programs that target job seekers with multiple employment barriers, such as the ones featured in this report, tend to focus on very basic skill sets, such as appropriate workplace behaviors, job seeking skills, and general interpersonal skills. These programs offer job placement staff who serve as intermediaries between job seekers and employers, and who provide character references and assessments for employers skeptical about past behaviors such as substance use or a criminal record. Many also provide job retention and follow-up support services. The combination of job readiness classes, soft skills classes, job placement and follow-up services comprise what is referred to here as employment services<sup>2</sup>.

Job readiness classes are usually provided in a classroom-type setting. Though the length of the class varies, they typically are held daily for two to four weeks. Common topics include resume writing, appropriate office attire, career planning, and interviewing skills. Soft skills classes are often incorporated in the job readiness series. Soft skill topics may include conflict resolution, personal and work attitudes, timeliness, and problem solving. Upon completion of these classes the job search begins. Job placement services include linking job seekers with employers, assistance in filling out applications, setting up interviews and preparing for the interviews. Employers are located in multiple ways including job fairs, recruitment by agency staff and identification by program participants. Follow-up services focus on job retention and can also include career development and re-employment assistance. These services are often targeted at both the employer and the employee, and can include troubleshooting, referrals to support services, and assistance with transportation.

Five not-for-profit agencies that target job seekers who are facing barriers to obtaining and/or retaining employment participated in this study. Each agency has a slightly different service niche: one is a homeless service provider, one is a social service agency, one is an employment services agency that brings its services on-site to shelters and halfway houses, another primarily operates work experience programs, and one focuses on parental involvement of non-custodial parents. These agencies are located in geographically diverse areas of the city: two are located on the near west side, one on the mid-south side, one on the far south side and one agency, while housed on the north side, brings its services to agencies across the city. Specific detail on each program can be found in *Appendix B*.

Based on interviews with staff and observations of service provision, we found that all five of the programs use a basic employment services model with the addition of either short or long-

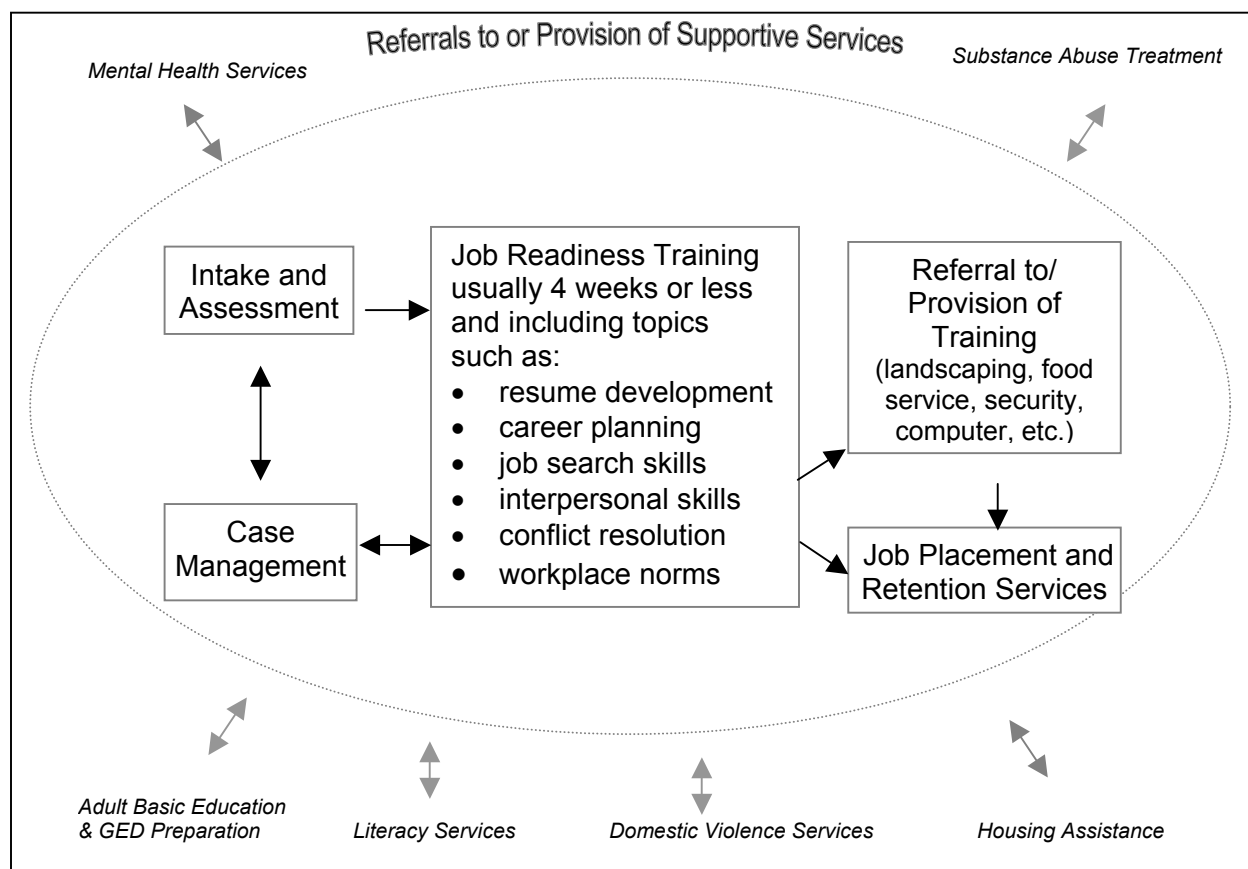
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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report we differentiate between employment services and job or vocational training. The term training throughout this report refers to a program in which a participant acquires a specific skill that prepares him or her for an occupation.

term case management services. The case management provided meets the standard definition of the role of a case manager as “a single staff member who has an overview of all aspects of a participant’s experience in the program. That person provides guidance as the participant progresses through the program – counseling on career goals, assistance in solving child care and transportation problems, assistance in resolving family crises, and motivational support” (Hershey, 1989). Often the case manager role includes making referrals to additional supportive services and programs, including education and job training programs.

In most cases, this expanded employment services model is also augmented and altered by a number of program-specific features that distinguish service providers from one another. For instance, one provider specializes in providing a wide continuum of support services including housing, food, clothing, mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, basic education, job training, and transportation. Another provider specializes in providing coordinated case management that complements the services its participants receive in the shelters and halfway houses where they are staying as they look for work. A third program provides services that focus on creating and renewing relationships between participants who are non-custodial parents and their children. **Figure 1** shows a graphic depiction of the expanded employment services model.

**Figure 1: Expanded Employment Services Model**



These programs expanded the basic employment service model out of necessity. In order to address the barriers to employment their participants face, these programs have added additional services to support the goal of employment. Three of these agencies have gone beyond these additional services by designing their programs with two concepts in mind: continuity and flexibility. They have identified continuity as an essential ingredient to success when working with people who are accessing several types of services. Case managers are one part of providing continuity. A case manager will continue to work with program participants after they have completed the employment services portion of the program. The case managers follow-up with linkages to outside services and help address emerging needs. For a few agencies, providing a palette of services in-house is another way of providing continuity. Providing a wide range of services on-site reduces the need for participants to develop new organizational relationships and travel to various service sites.

Program flexibility takes many forms. Programs emphasizing flexibility attempt to serve participants at the appropriate level based on their skills and barriers to employment at the time they enter the program. Therefore, there are low-threshold requirements for participation, for example no minimum reading and math test scores as an admission requirement. Also, the programs recognize that people will need supports at various points along the way and respond to this need by providing referrals to appropriate services at every juncture in the program.

Flexible service models base the duration of program participation on the participant's needs and may extend delivery of program services according to the level of need. Aside from the work experience program, participants are served by the agencies for as long as they need services. One agency has an extensive continuum of services that lasts approximately two years. Two agencies keep contact for as long as possible, using both an open door policy and active attempts at follow-up. These two agencies provide support groups for program graduates, case management assistance, as well as re-employment assistance. Another agency relies on the participant to come back for services as needed, utilizing a more hands-off approach.

Finally, the programs recognize that not all participants need the same services in the same sequence. In most cases the programs are flexible in sequencing the service components. For example, some participants' job search starts upon completion of the job readiness classes. For others, job search is preceded by enrollment in basic education courses or vocational training. Individualized planning is a fundamental piece of the service provision packages. The menu of services either directly provided by these agencies or provided via referral can be found in **Figure 2**. Not every agency offered each service on the menu.

**Figure 2: Menu of Services Available**

|                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Employment services                 | Health Care Referrals               |
| Career Planning                     | Mental Health Services or Referrals |
| Job Readiness Classes               | Substance Abuse Treatment Referrals |
| Job Placement Services              | Money Management Assistance         |
| Job Retention Classes               | Transportation Assistance           |
| Case Management                     | Food Referrals                      |
| Education Classes or Referrals      | Clothing Referrals                  |
| Job Training Provision or Referrals | Assistance with Legal Needs         |
| Housing Provision or Referrals      |                                     |

During the follow-up interviews we asked job seekers to indicate which of the services in **Figure 2** they utilized, to point out which were the most helpful, to think about what services would have helped with their job search but that they did not receive, and to identify specific services that they were in need of at the time of the interview. Detail on these results can be found in the service utilization and cost analysis section of the report. We collected this information because we were interested in the package of services received by job seekers who experience multiple barriers to employment. In order to make recommendations that will enhance these job seekers employment outcomes, we need to know how programs and job seekers are currently addressing these needs.

# Findings

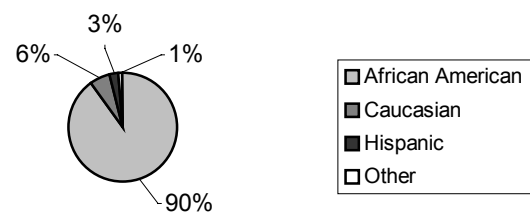
Job seeker demographic information, job history, detail on barriers to employment, employment outcomes, and information on cash assistance and social service utilization were collected through 146 initial job seeker interviews and 49 follow-up interviews. Some questions were asked multiple times in different formats as an attempt to check the accuracy of responses.

The typical employment services program participant that we interviewed is a 40 year-old African American male who has a GED or high school diploma. He has a criminal record as well as a history of substance use. He has no income whatsoever and does not receive food stamps. He is unemployed but has worked within the past year. He is receiving temporary housing assistance, most often in the form of rent-free housing with free meals included.

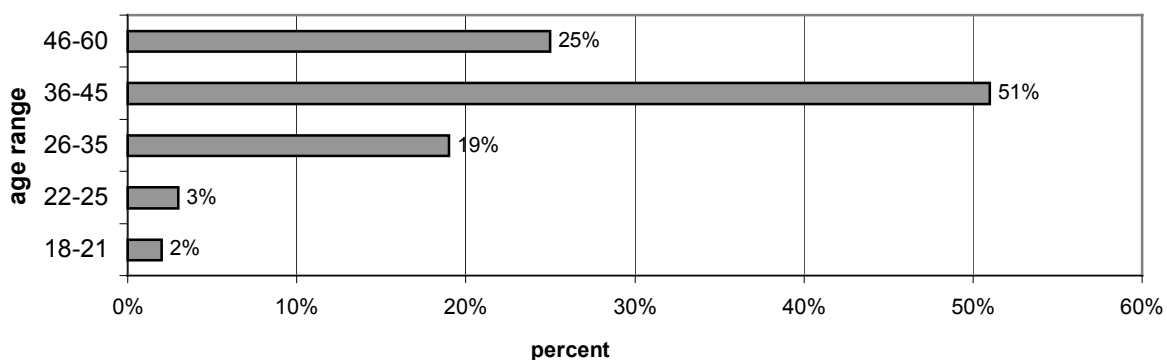
## Demographics

The following demographic information is taken from the 146 initial interviews. The majority of job seekers we interviewed are male (83%) and African American (90%), though nearly one-fifth are female (17%). Further detail on race/ethnicity can be found in **Chart 1**. While there was a large variation in age from 20 years old to 60 years old, the average age was 40 years old, with the majority (51%) falling in the 36 to 45 years old age range.<sup>3</sup>

**Chart 1: Race/Ethnicity (N=146)**



**Chart 2: Age Range as of August, 2000**



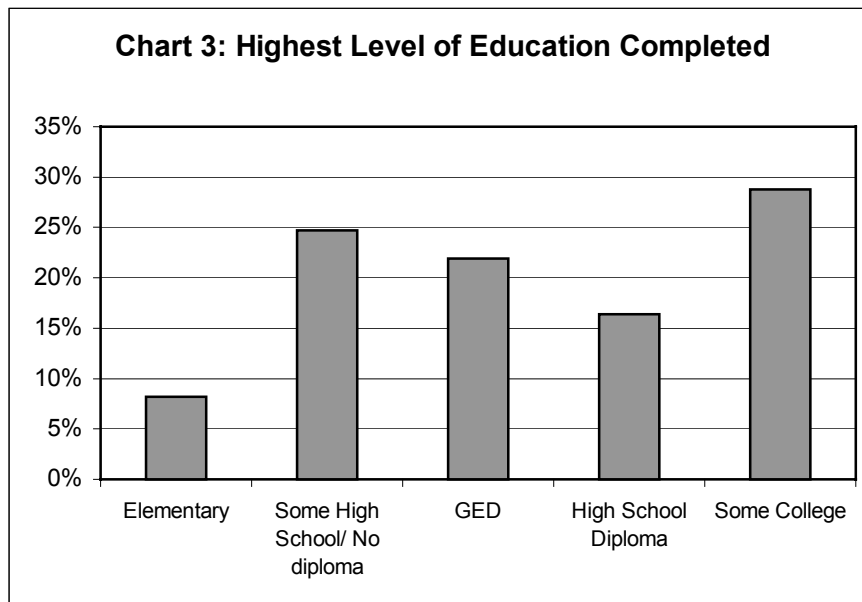
<sup>3</sup> Age was measured as of the end of August 2000.

### Education

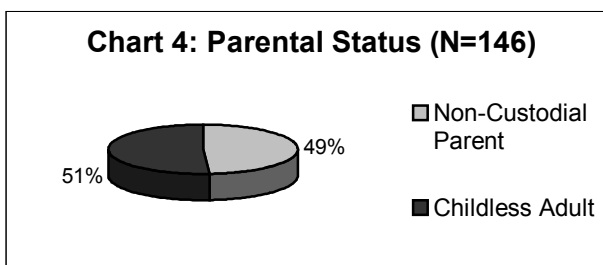
The majority (67%) of the job seekers interviewed have at least a GED or high school diploma. A significant minority (33%) does not have either, and a small subset (8%) of that ended school sometime during the elementary grades. Seventy-one percent of the job seekers without a diploma or GED reported having literacy problems, while less than a fifth (18.4%) of those with a diploma or GED reported having literacy issues. Over one quarter of the job seekers had received at least some college education.

### Family Composition

Sixty-six percent of the job seekers had children, with the median number of children being two, though not all of them had children under the age of 18 at the time of the interview. The sample is divided nearly down the middle between childless adults<sup>4</sup> (51%) and non-custodial parents (49%).<sup>5</sup>



Over one-quarter of the non-custodial parents were providing financial support to the custodial parent at the time of the initial interview. Only 9.5 percent of them paid child support through the Illinois Department of Public Aid system, though an additional 17.6 percent of non-custodial parents provided money to the custodial parent whenever possible. We did not collect information regarding whether there was a child support order in place.



### Longitudinal Sample

We reached one-third of the job seekers again for follow-up interviews. This portion of the initial sample is reflective of the entire sample on most demographic indicators. The majority (86%) was male. In terms of race/ethnicity, the large majority (90%) again was African-American, with 6 percent Caucasian and four percent Hispanic. The average age was 41.5 years

<sup>4</sup> Twenty-eight of these childless adults have parented children, but these children are aged 18 or over.

<sup>5</sup> Over a quarter (28%) of the parents had their first child when they were a teen.

old,<sup>6</sup> with the majority (61%) again falling in the 36 to 45 year old age bracket. This average age is over one year older than the sample as a whole.

As with the entire sample, 65 percent of the follow-up interview respondents had at least a high school diploma or GED. Again, a significant minority (34.6%) did not have either, with a small subset (12.2%) that ended school sometime during the elementary grades. This less educated group represents a larger portion of the follow-up interview sample than it did in the sample as a whole.

The initial and longitudinal samples differ the most in their parental status demographics. Well over half (61%) of the follow-up sample were childless adults and over a third (39%) were non-custodial parents. Childless adults comprised a larger portion of the longitudinal sample, and non-custodial parents much less.

In sum, the members of the longitudinal sample were slightly older, similar in terms of gender and race/ethnicity, were slightly more likely to have ended school during the elementary grades, and were more likely to be childless adults than the entire sample.

## Income

We compiled the job seekers' monthly income by combining cash assistance amounts, income from employment and income from any other sources received in the month prior to the interview. The income from employment was, in some instances, estimated based on hourly wage and number of hours typically worked per week. See **Chart 5** for a breakdown of income sources.

The top two sources of income at both the initial and follow-up interviews were employment earnings and Earnfare income (\$294 per month). Earnfare is a work experience program that is targeted at unemployed adults in Illinois who receive food stamps. After working off the value of their food stamp benefits, participants can work up to 80 additional hours per month at minimum wage for six months out of any consecutive 12-month period. Detail on Earnfare participation can be found later in the report.

The average monthly income at the initial interview was \$179. This is not surprising given that most job seekers would not enroll in a job readiness program if they had a steady income source. The income amounts ranged from \$0 to \$1,293 per month, though the median and mode were \$0. The majority (68.5%) of the job seekers had no income at all. Those with no income were younger than the rest of the sample. They were also more likely to have ended school during the elementary grades and much less likely to have received a high school diploma than the rest of the sample. Finally, they were just as likely as the rest of the sample to have been employed at some time.

When food stamps are added to the income mix things improve slightly. The average income increased to \$228 and the median increased from \$0 to \$127<sup>7</sup>. The number of people with no

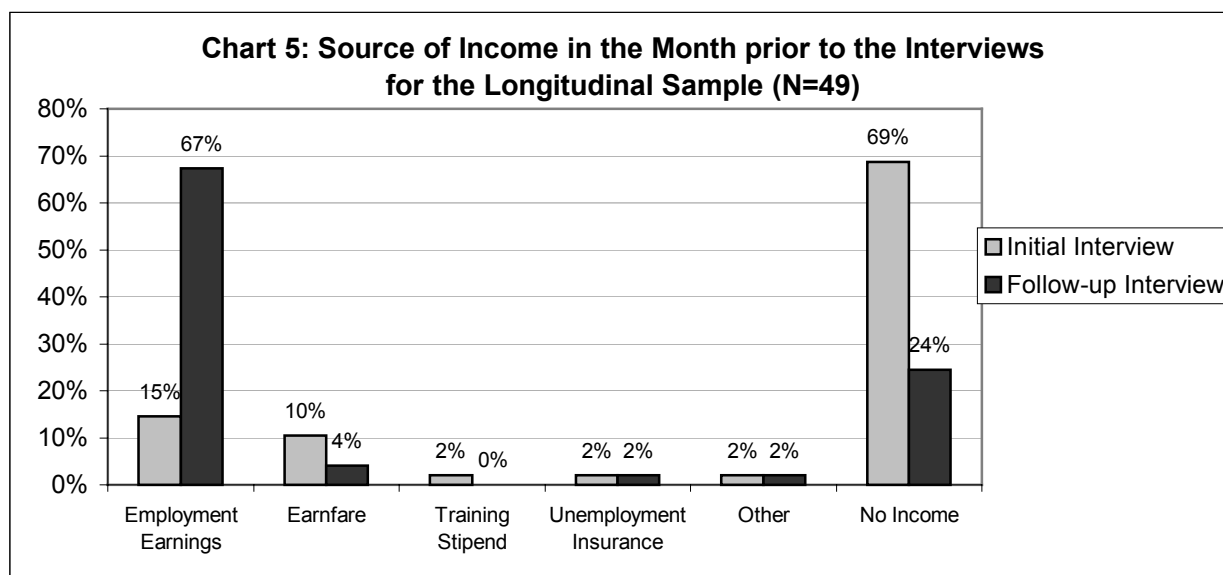
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<sup>6</sup> Age was measured as of the end of August 2000 as it was in the data on the full sample.

<sup>7</sup> \$130 is the maximum dollar amount of food stamp benefits for a one-person household in 2001.



income dropped from 100 to 61, but this still leaves almost half (42%) of the sample with no income at all.



By the time of the follow-up interviews these figures had changed significantly. The majority of the longitudinal sample had employment income. The average income received in the month prior to the interview was \$545, though the amounts ranged from \$0 to \$1,800 per month. This longitudinal sample experienced a 183 percent increase in their monthly income on average. Again, when food stamps are added to the mix, the average monthly income increases, this time to \$598, leaving only 18 percent of the sample without any income. This average monthly income, with or without food stamps, is well below the poverty line for a household of one.<sup>8</sup> It is also inadequate to pay the Fair Market Rent<sup>9</sup> in Chicago, which, for a studio apartment, is \$551 per month.

## Safety Net

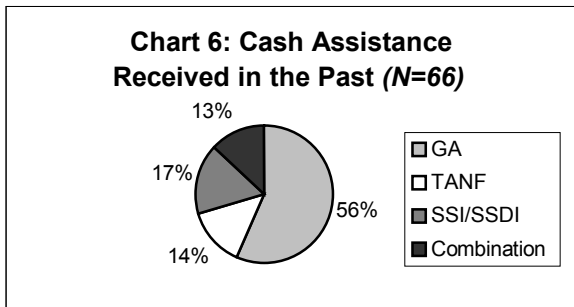
Nearly half (45%) of the job seekers interviewed were former recipients of cash-based public assistance benefits. The majority (65%) of those who had received cash assistance had received General Assistance, though a significant number were former TANF recipients. The breakdown of the type of assistance received in the past is displayed in **Chart 6**. A wide variety of reasons were given for the termination of cash assistance. These reasons included an increase

<sup>8</sup> The 2001 poverty line for a family unit of one published in the Federal Register February 16, 2001, by the Department of Health and Human Services is \$8590.

<sup>9</sup> Fair Market Rent, or FMR, is established by HUD. FMRs are gross rent estimates that include the shelter rent plus the cost of all utilities, except telephones. The level at which FMRs are set is expressed as a percentile point within the rent distribution of standard-quality rental housing units. The current definition used is the 40th percentile rent, the dollar amount below which 40 percent of the standard-quality rental housing units are rented.

in earned income or assets, a change in a child's age or family composition, change in program eligibility definition, voluntary withdrawal from program, and the termination of the program. A few job seekers (14) had applications pending for SSI, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), TA or Veterans assistance (VA).

Only 5 job seekers received unemployment insurance (UI) at either the initial or follow-up interviews, though the majority of the sample was employed within the previous year. Many reported they had not applied for UI on the assumption or reality that they were not eligible. A few reported they had applied and were denied due to ineligibility.



Just over a third (38%) of the job seekers received food stamps and a few (6 people) had applications pending at the initial interview. One of the reasons for this low rate of food stamp receipt was that many of the job seekers were residing in shelters and were ineligible for food stamps.<sup>10</sup> We found just the opposite with the longitudinal sample: the percent receiving food stamps increased greatly to 63 percent.

## Housing

Everyone had some type of housing at the time of the initial interview, though for the majority it was a temporary situation such as a shelter or doubled up with friends or family. The agencies involved in the study either provide housing, link people to housing, or work within other agencies that provide housing. The majority of job seekers had just recently moved into their current housing. The reasons these job seekers gave most frequently for leaving their previous housing situation and moving into this new one were: entered substance abuse treatment, could not afford rent, housing was temporary, apartment was overcrowded or unsafe, or a new housing opportunity arose.

Nearly half (48%) of the job seekers were homeless<sup>11</sup> in the sense that they were residing in shelters or doubling up with family or friends. An additional 42 percent were receiving time-

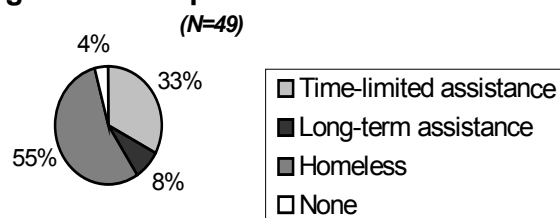
<sup>10</sup> Eligibility for food stamps is primarily determined by amounts of household income and expenses, number of persons living and eating together and amount of available liquid assets. Individuals who are staying in shelters need access to cooking facilities in order to be eligible.

<sup>11</sup> The study adopted the same definition of homeless as that used in the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 with the addition of people who are temporarily 'doubled up', that is sleeping on someone's couch or floor for a short period of time. In accordance with the McKinney Act an individual is considered homeless who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, or an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is: (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); (b) a public or private place that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.

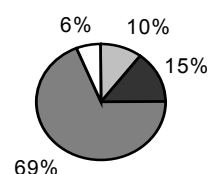
limited rental assistance, which includes halfway houses, transitional housing facilities, and in-patient substance abuse treatment. This assistance is short-term – often with 30 to 90 day time limits. Again, the high rate of homelessness and use of time limited housing assistance is not surprising given the low monthly incomes and the number of people without any cash income. A small percentage (5%) received some type of permanent housing assistance either in the form of Section 8 rental subsidy, public housing or project-based Section 8. The average amount of monthly rent paid by those who did pay rent was \$206.54, though the amount ranges from \$0 to \$565, with the majority not paying any rent.

The length of time people had resided in their housing at the time of the initial interview varied widely from less than one month to 30 years. Those with the longest lengths of residence were most often living in their childhood homes. Over half (54.6%) had been in their housing for three months or less. The vast majority (91.5%) had been at their current residence less than one year.

**Chart 7: Type of Housing Assistance for Longitudinal Sample at Initial Interview**



**and at Follow-up (N=48)**



The longitudinal sample experienced a major shift in type of housing assistance they utilized at follow-up. As shown in the above pie charts, a much greater percentage (69%) was considered homeless at follow-up, and a much smaller percentage received time-limited assistance. This shift occurred primarily because the job seekers reached their time limits in the halfway houses or in the in-patient treatment programs and moved on to double up with friends or family. Just about the same percent of job seekers were staying in a shelter. Again, only a small percent received some type of long-term housing assistance. The average rent payment for those who paid rent was \$286.31, a slight increase over that paid at the initial interview.

## Employment History

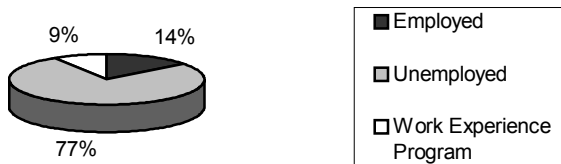
Nearly all (97%) of the job seekers initially interviewed had, at one time or another, paid employment, though only a small percentage (14%) were employed at the time of the initial interview. The majority (77%) of the job seekers were unemployed and the rest (9%) were in a paid work experience program. This low rate of employment was to be expected because most of the job seekers were enrolled in the programs when they could not secure employment and since several of the programs do not allow people to work while in training.

At the initial interview, the majority of those currently employed were working through a temporary labor agency or in food service. A few people held higher skilled positions including an office manager and a research assistant. Among those who were employed, the average

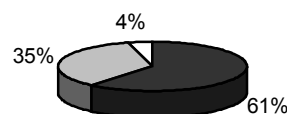
hourly wage was \$6.97 and the average number of hours worked per week was 30. The majority (67%) of current employees had been on the job for three months or less.

**Chart 8: Employment Status:**

**First Interview (N=146)**



**Follow-Up Interview (N=49)**



Nearly half (48.9%) of the job seekers at the time of initial interview had worked within the past year, though over one third (35%) had not worked in at least the previous three years. The most common previously held positions included food service, maintenance/janitor, clerical/receptionist, assembly, stocking/packing, truck driver and housekeeping/laundry. Some job seekers had held higher skilled positions, including a data processor, a business owner, a bookkeeper and a supervisor. The average wage at the most recent previous job was \$7.75 per hour<sup>12</sup>, with a median hourly wage of \$6.70 and with the majority of people working 40 hours per week. The median length of time on the previous job was eight months, though nearly half held the job for less than six months. Many job seekers reported a high rate of job instability, staying on jobs for only a short period of time and cycling through many jobs.

The reasons these job seekers left their previous job provide some insight into employment barriers that they are facing. A few of the reasons given for leaving their last job are detailed in **Table 1**. These reasons range from personal and behavioral (health and substance use) to infrastructure related (transportation) to labor market

| <b>Table 1: Reason for Job Ending</b> | <b>Initial Interview (N=125)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Related to alcohol or substance use   | 18.4%                            |
| Incarceration                         | 14.4%                            |
| Job was temporary                     | 9.6%                             |
| Transportation/distance problems      | 9.6%                             |
| Health reason                         | 7.2%                             |
| Laid off/business closed              | 7.2%                             |
| Conflict at work                      | 6.4%                             |

related reasons (temporary jobs, business closings and downsizing). When asked again during the follow-up interview why their previous job ended, the reasons were similar: alcohol or substance use and the job was temporary. More detail on how the sample is affected by such issues can be found later in the report in the section on barriers to employment.

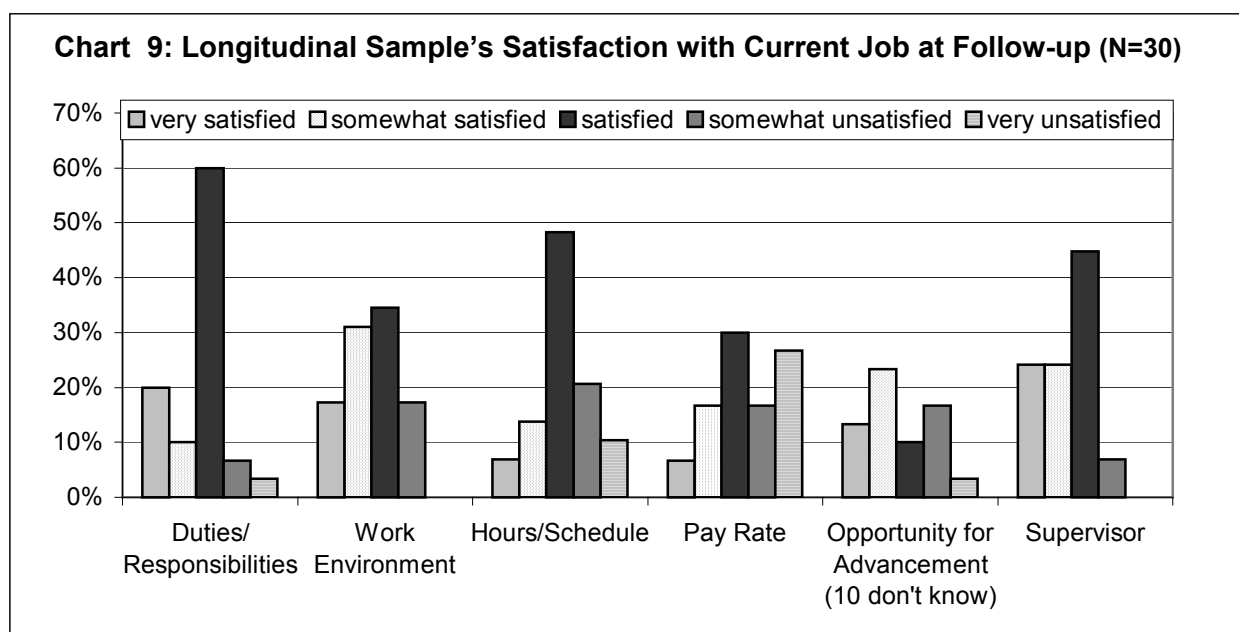
The majority of the job seekers interviewed at follow-up were employed. The most common jobs included housekeeping, building demolition, retail, clerical and food service. The average hourly wage at follow-up was \$7.44, with the median and mode at \$7.00. Nearly half (45 %) of those who were employed had a total income below the poverty line for a household of one.

<sup>12</sup> This wage figure includes some people whose last job was before the minimum wage change. It also includes people who were paid by the production rate or in the case of childcare, by child (their hourly wage is very low). A few people also had wages over \$15 per hour.

The average number of hours worked per week was 32.5 hours, with the majority of people working 40 hours. Finally, the length of time on the job varied widely, with some in their first month on the job and others having been in the same job for two years. The average number of months on the job was 5.7, with the median and the mode at 4 months. Over a quarter of job seekers had held two jobs within the past six months.

| <b>Table 2: Employment Details for Longitudinal Sample Over Time</b> | Mode Wage <sup>13</sup> | Average # of hours worked | Median # of months on the Job |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Most Recent Previous Job (n=44)                                      | \$6.00                  | 36                        | 5.5                           |
| Employed at Follow-up Interview (n= 30)                              | \$7.00                  | 33                        | 4                             |

During the follow-up interview we collected more detailed information about the current job. Nearly one third (30%) of those employed had jobs that included sick time and paid vacation. Over a third (40%) were offered health insurance through their jobs, but most (75%) of these employers required an employee contribution. Only two of those employed were able to contribute but only one did, so most remained uninsured. Additional information was gathered regarding job satisfaction, additional benefits, and job search methods. As depicted in **Chart 9**, those who were employed at follow-up were satisfied with most parts of their job.



### Job Skills & Training History

At the time of the initial interview, over half (56%) of the job seekers had previously participated in one job training, vocational or educational program. Over one-fifth (22%) had participated in at least two job training, vocational or educational programs previously. Half (41 job seekers) of those who had received previous job training or vocational or educational instruction were able

<sup>13</sup> We display the mode wage here, which is the most frequently occurring wage. We did this for two reasons. First, a number of people were receiving the same wage. Second, there were a few wage outliers that skewed the average.

to obtain jobs related to that training. Nearly half (44%) of the job seekers who had participated in training previously had completed the training program within the past five years. However, a substantial minority (47%) had completed the training ten or more years ago.

Over one-fifth (11 job seekers) of the longitudinal sample had engaged in a vocational training or education program since the initial interview. Two of them had never enrolled in training before, and five had previously completed training ten or more years ago. Vocational training in the case of the longitudinal sample was primarily targeted at the job seekers who were most in need of them, that is those whose skills were extremely limited or outdated.

The skills and topics in which the job seekers have been trained vary widely and include computer operations, cooking and food preparation, landscaping, building maintenance, automotive repair, nursing assistant, and truck driving.

Not included in the above training figures is service in the armed forces, which provides job training as well. Just less than one fifth (16%) of the job seekers were Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. They had been trained for specialized positions including a medic, a water purification specialist, a radio teletype operator, a switchboard operator, a boiler technician and an administrator. The majority served during the 1980's and most (73.9%) had an honorable discharge.

A subset of job training programs serving people deemed 'hard to employ' are work experience programs. As mentioned earlier, the state of Illinois runs a large work experience program targeted at low-income single adults who are unemployed and receive food stamp called Earnfare. Participants are placed into jobs where they work off the value of their food stamps and then are paid minimum wage for up to 80 hours per month. The goal is to place people into subsidized jobs where they can acquire the skills and work experience needed for full time employment. One-third of the sample had participated previously or at the time of the interviews in the state's Earnfare program.

Nearly one-third (31.3%) of the Earnfare participants in our sample have participated in the program more than once.<sup>14</sup> The positions in which participants were most likely to be placed were food service, maintenance/custodial, clerical, housekeeping and stockroom work. These are all low-skill positions, and are similar to the positions people have held in the past, as noted earlier in this report. Only 10.4 percent of the Earnfare placements led to a permanent job for the participant. Some of the job seekers used the Earnfare program regularly as a safety net and primary income source when they repeatedly failed at securing unsubsidized employment.

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<sup>14</sup> Persons who meet the Earnfare eligibility requirements can only participate in the program for six months in any consecutive 12-month period.

## Occupation & Wage Preferences

Job seekers were asked to describe their ideal job or the job they are hoping to obtain. The most commonly cited ideal job was clerical or office work. Other jobs commonly cited include:

- maintenance
- social services
- food service
- truck or bus driver
- stocking shelves/packing
- construction worker
- machine operator
- nurses aid or home health care

These job titles are generally in line with both the training people have received and the jobs they have held in the past. A few high-skilled positions were listed including pediatrics and engineering. Regarding job availability, a Holzer study (1996) found that the majority of entry-level jobs in urban areas were in the service, retail, or trade sectors.

The job seekers were also asked to identify the absolute minimum wage that would cover their basic needs, including rent, utilities, and food. The most common response was \$10 an hour. The average of all of the responses was \$9.08, though some said they needed as much as \$25 to meet their needs. These wage figures are considerably higher than the wages these job seekers have received at their current or past jobs. As mentioned earlier, the average hourly wage for the entire sample at their previous job was \$7.75, and the average hourly wage being received by the longitudinal sample was \$7.49. This wage gap indicates that these single adults and non-custodial parents were not able to meet their basic needs solely through employment income.

Most of the job titles that these job seekers have held, as well as most of the occupations they prefer to have, fall within Illinois' 2001 top occupations by annual openings<sup>15</sup>. These occupations fall under the short-term or moderate-term on-the-job training categories. Finally, most of these occupations pay entry wages under \$7.00 per hour, but most offer experienced wages for over \$10.00 per hour.

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<sup>15</sup> Published by the Illinois Department of Employment Security

## Barriers to Employment

As the data presented thus far indicate, the group of job seekers we interviewed has many assets related to employment. These strengths include having a GED or high school diploma, having worked in the past and in particular having worked within the last year, and having engaged in some type of job training program. However, something is limiting their capacity to work regularly, keep a job, or otherwise meet their needs through employment. This section details some of the literature on employment barriers and job seeker responses to questions regarding what has gotten in the way of them getting or keeping a job.

Most of the current research and reports on barriers to employment focus on welfare recipients, who are obviously only a subset of the job-seeking population. The findings are nonetheless helpful because they give an idea of how barriers might impact employment prospects of all job seekers. Common barriers to employment referred to in the literature are childcare, transportation, substance abuse, mental health, and lack of job related skills. While childcare is not relevant for the job seekers we interviewed, as none have custody of their children, we found that the other barriers are relevant.

One of the most comprehensive studies on barriers to employment, released out of the University of Michigan, found that the presence and number of very young children, as well as lower levels of schooling and work experience, are negatively associated with employment for welfare recipients.

In addition to low education and lack of work experience, six other barriers are significantly and negatively associated with working at least 20 hours per week: having few work skills, perceiving 4 or more experiences of workplace discrimination, lacking access to transportation, and meeting the screening criteria for depression, drug dependence, or poor health. In addition to these barriers, being younger, having very young children and not living in an urban census tract reduce employment. Factors such as race, marital status, lack of knowledge of workplace norms, and recent domestic abuse are not significantly associated with employment (Danziger, 2000, p. 20-21).

The study also found that the number of barriers to employment faced by welfare recipients is strongly and negatively associated with employment status. “One of these problems alone might not interfere with work, but in combination with low education and few job skills, they could create obstacles on the job or in job search. Lack of a high school diploma by itself does not constitute a rigid barrier to employment, but an employer might be less willing to hire a high school drop out who also has few work skills, transportation problems and is depressed” (Danziger, 2000, p. 17).

Thus, often the predictor of success for welfare recipients in obtaining or retaining a job is not necessarily the specific barrier that they have, but the number of barriers and their intensity. The cumulative effect is what hinders many from succeeding. However, there are a few barriers that appear to have more impact than others. The specific barriers identified in the Danziger study referenced above are workplace discrimination, low work skills and drug dependence.

The barriers identified by the job seekers’ responses to questions regarding what has gotten in the way of them getting or keeping a job are divided into categories in **Figure 3** to help facilitate policy and programmatic solutions to address such barriers.

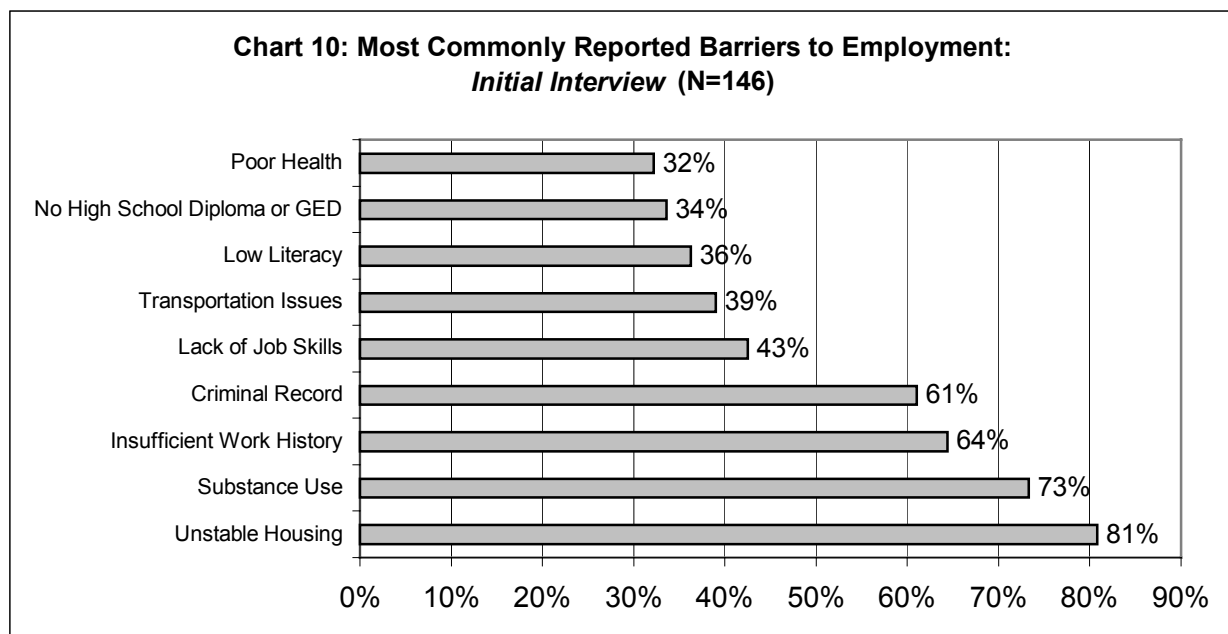


**Figure 3: Barrier Categorization**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b><u>Human Capital Barriers</u></b>   | <b><u>Individual Level Barriers (psycho-social)</u></b>  |
| Lack of job skills<br>Education: no high school diploma/GED<br>Low literacy<br>Lack of work experience<br>Lack of interpersonal (soft) skills    | <b><u>Health Related:</u></b> Substance use/abuse<br>Mental health issue<br>Poor health/disability<br><b><u>Social (family):</u></b> Domestic violence<br>Other family circumstances |
| <b><u>Infrastructure Level Barriers</u></b><br>Transportation issue<br>Spatial mismatch (housing & jobs far apart)<br>Lack of affordable housing | <b><u>Other Barriers:</u></b><br>Criminal record<br>Work expenses<br>Workplace discrimination  |

It is important to note that we did not use any specialized scales or tests to determine whether a job seeker had a barrier. We relied on their self-identification of barriers through answers to questions during the initial interview. Interviewers probed for clarification and for honest answers. There were multiple questions per type of barrier spread throughout the interview in order to gather the most accurate information possible in a short interview. We feel that we developed a reasonably accurate picture of the barriers the job seekers actually have based on this information, though some barriers may be underreported due to the stigma attached to them. In addition, barriers are not always mutually exclusive. For example substance use, criminal record and lack of work history can all be related.

All of the job seekers served by the job readiness programs from which we have collected data have experienced at least two or more of these barriers. This is not wholly surprising given that the study intentionally targeted programs that served people with employment barriers. What is remarkable is the extent to which they experienced combinations of many of these barriers, and the specific barriers experienced. The barriers most commonly identified by the job seekers as inhibiting their current and past efforts to become or remain employed are reported in **Chart 10**.



## Human Capital Barriers

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Human capital development is important for securing even entry-level jobs. Holzer (1996) found that about three fourths (75%) of entry level jobs required a high school diploma, general experience and references; 65 percent required specific experience; 40 percent required training; and over half required applicants to pass a test. Well over three-fourths (85.6%) of the job seekers in this study experienced human capital deficits as inhibitors to employment. These were the most commonly cited barriers.

### *Job Skills*

Nearly half (43%) of the job seekers reported that a lack of job skills hinders their chances at obtaining or retaining a job. Half of those who identified lack of job skills as a barrier had not enrolled in any vocational training previously or educational program recently.

### *Education*

As mentioned earlier, a third (34%) of job seekers have no diploma or GED. Nearly all of them experienced this as a barrier to employment. Job seekers with less than a high school education were significantly less likely to be employed at the time of the follow-up interview than those with a high school diploma, GED, or some college experience<sup>16</sup>

### *Literacy*

Over one-third (36%) of the job seekers reported having literacy issues. For the specific areas in which they reported having these literacy issues refer to **Table 3**. Of those who reported having literacy issues, 74 percent had problems in one subject area, 13 percent had problems in two subject areas and 13 percent reported having had problems in three subject areas. Well over half (66%) of those with literacy issues have no high school diploma or GED.

| Table 3: Categories of Literacy Issues |                          |                            |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Issue Area                             | Percent of Entire Sample | Percent of Literacy Sample |
| reading                                | 13%                      | 41%                        |
| math                                   | 21%                      | 67%                        |
| writing                                | 10%                      | 30%                        |

### *Work Experience*

Over half (64%) of the job seekers reported that their lack of work history and experience interfered with obtaining a job. For some this is related to another barrier: having a criminal record, since lengthy incarceration leaves a large gap on a resume.

### *Interpersonal Skills*

We did not directly inquire about this barrier. Problems with interpersonal skills were captured in the data indirectly when people explained why they left or were terminated from their last job. Approximately 7.5 percent of job seekers listed interpersonal conflicts as a reason for leaving or being fired from this last job.

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<sup>16</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.10 level ( $p = .085$ ).

## **Infrastructure Level Barriers**

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The vast majority (84.9%) of the sample cited infrastructure barriers as hindering their employment efforts.

### *Transportation & Spatial Mismatch*

We found that transportation problems are too intertwined with issues of spatial mismatch to clearly separate them from each other. Further clarifying questions that were needed to get at which factor is actually causing the trouble with getting to work were not included in the interviews due to interview length constraints. When asked if transportation was a barrier to employment, 39 percent replied affirmatively. Transportation problems come in many forms. Lack of a car is one. Only three people (2.1%) owned a car. Other problems include no public transportation that reaches the job site, service hours of public transportation do not match with job hours, and length of travel from home to work is prohibitive.

At the initial interview, nearly one quarter (23%) of the sample received transportation assistance (mostly travel expenses related to job readiness and other program activities). The majority received \$60 in CTA fare. For the most part this is short-term assistance. At follow-up, only 6 percent received assistance, again in the form of \$60 in CTA fare.

### *Housing*

Housing is a foundation for obtaining and retaining employment. The most prevalent barrier identified by the job seekers we interviewed was unstable housing. Over three quarters (81%) of the job seekers were struggling with this problem. As indicated earlier in the report, the majority (80%) of job seekers interviewed were receiving temporary housing assistance of many types at the time of the first interview, including homeless shelter, halfway house, transitional housing, and in-patient substance abuse treatment. As this assistance is short-term in nature – often with 30 to 90 day time limits – these job seekers experienced an increase in housing instability when they reached the time limits and could not secure an affordable unit. This housing instability is in part related to having little or no income and in part related to the housing market in Chicago. Jobs and housing are intertwined, as it is hard to have one without the other.

## **Individual Level Barriers: *Health Related***

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Well over three-fourths (84.9%) of the job seekers have health related problems that interfere with employment. Employment income for the longitudinal sample was found to be significantly negatively correlated with overall health<sup>17</sup>.

### *Substance Use/Abuse*

A number of studies have found that alcohol and drug use negatively impact employment and earnings (Kalil, 1998). In addition, a U.S. Department of Labor Welfare to Work flyer reports that in the current labor force, 16 percent of the unemployed report current illicit drug use and 9.1 percent of the unemployed report heavy alcohol use. We found this problem to be prevalent among the job seekers in the study, as they identified substance use as the second most common barrier to finding and keeping employment.

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<sup>17</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.10 level ( $p = .057$ ).

Nearly three-fourths (73%) of the job seekers reported substance abuse is a barrier for them in obtaining or retaining a job. As shown earlier, 18 percent of them left their last job for reasons related to alcohol or substance abuse. Half of the job seekers reported having been a past participant in substance abuse treatment and nearly one-fifth (18%) reported a desire to limit their use of alcohol or drugs.

Finally, job instability was significantly negatively correlated with substance use. Job seekers who had had a greater number of jobs in the past six months at the time of the follow-up interview were more likely than those who had fewer jobs to report substance use as a barrier<sup>18</sup>

At the initial interview, over one quarter (30%) were enrolled in inpatient or outpatient substance abuse treatment programs. For those in outpatient treatment, the number of visits per month ranged from 2 to 30, with an average of around 10 visits per month. Well over half (66%) of the job seekers attended AA or NA meetings, with an average attendance of just over 19 meetings per month. The number of meetings attended ranged from 2 to 30 per month. At follow-up, only 2 people were enrolled in treatment, one in inpatient and one in outpatient treatment. Half of the job seekers attended AA or NA meetings, attending an average of just over 13 visits per month.

### *Mental Health*

We estimate that 12 percent of the job seekers experienced mental health as a barrier to employment. Some clearly identified this as a barrier, while other indicated mental health issues as the reason they left previous jobs. Given that we have only interviewed the majority of the job seekers once, it is likely that not everyone disclosed their mental health issues due to stigma or lack of trust and that this barrier is therefore under-reported. “There is considerable evidence that psychiatric disorders are associated with lower rates of employment than the general population” (Kalil, 1998, p. 8). Employment income for the longitudinal sample was significantly negatively correlated with mental health problems<sup>19</sup>. In addition, job instability for the longitudinal sample was significantly negatively correlated with mental health. Job seekers who had had a greater number of jobs in the past six months at the time of the follow-up interview were more likely than those who had fewer jobs to face a mental health barrier<sup>20</sup>.

At the initial interview, twelve percent of the job seekers received mental health services, the majority attending meetings weekly. Only one person in the longitudinal sample utilized these services at follow-up.

### *Physical Health & Disability*

Research has consistently demonstrated a positive association between employment and health (Kalil, 1998). Although health is positively associated with employment, little research has been carried out on whether health problems are a barrier to employment (Kalil, p. 12). Nearly one

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<sup>18</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.10 level ( $p = .057$ ).

<sup>19</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.05 level ( $p = .051$ ).

<sup>20</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.10 level ( $p = .078$ ).

third (32%) of the job seekers in this study reported that health problems get in the way of keeping a job. Some of the specific health problems referred to are:

- |                 |                       |                   |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| • Asthma*       | • Heart problems      | • Arthritis       |
| • Diabetes*     | • High blood pressure | • Kidney problems |
| • Ulcers*       | • Dental problems     | • Bad feet*       |
| • Back problems | • AIDS                | • Poor eyesight*  |
| • Leg problems* | • Lupus               |                   |

\* reported by multiple people

At the initial interview, 3.4 percent of the job seekers were receiving Medicaid, no one received Medicare, 5 percent received VA medical benefits and two people had private health insurance. All in all, only 8.2 percent of those interviewed had some form of health insurance. Around a quarter (26%) of the job seekers reported relying on free medical assistance from clinics in shelters, Cook County Hospital (the county public health provider that provides the bulk of care for uninsured county residents), and other neighborhood health clinics, though only 15 percent had utilized such services in the preceding month. The majority (76.3%) of those receiving free medical assistance relied on Cook County Hospital for services.

At follow-up, only 2 people had health insurance, one from the VA and one through private insurance. Assistance from health clinics in shelters, Cook County Hospital and other neighborhood health clinics were utilized by 16 percent, with the majority again attending Cook County Hospital.

### **Individual Level Barriers: *Social/Family***

This category of barriers was the least experienced by the job seekers, with less than half (40.5%) identifying one or both of the following as an employment related problem.

#### *Domestic Violence*

Approximately 12 percent of the job seekers reported that domestic violence was a barrier to employment. We attempted to get at this through a few questions, though again, given that the job seekers have only been interviewed once, it is likely that not everyone disclosed this barrier due to stigma and to trust. Those that did report this as a barrier were often the batterers, not the victims. Employment income for the longitudinal sample was significantly negatively correlated with domestic violence<sup>21</sup>.

#### *Other Family Circumstances*

Over a fifth (22%) of the sample reported that family circumstances have prevented them from obtaining or retaining a job. Some examples of such circumstances were divorce, death in the family, and having an ill family member.

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<sup>21</sup>This difference is significant at the 0.10 level ( $p = .052$ ).

## Other Barriers:

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### *Criminal Record*

Over half (61%) of the job seekers have a felony conviction, and most report that it has been a barrier to securing employment. Job instability was significantly negatively correlated with having a criminal record. Job seekers who had had a greater number of jobs in the past six months at the time of the follow-up interview were more likely than those who had fewer jobs to have a criminal record<sup>22</sup>. Over one third (37.5%) of the entire sample was on parole at the initial interview, while only 14.3 percent were on parole at follow-up.

### *Work Expenses*

Some (14.4%) of the job seekers report that work expenses such as the purchase of tools, uniforms or supplies would interfere with their acceptance or retention on a job.

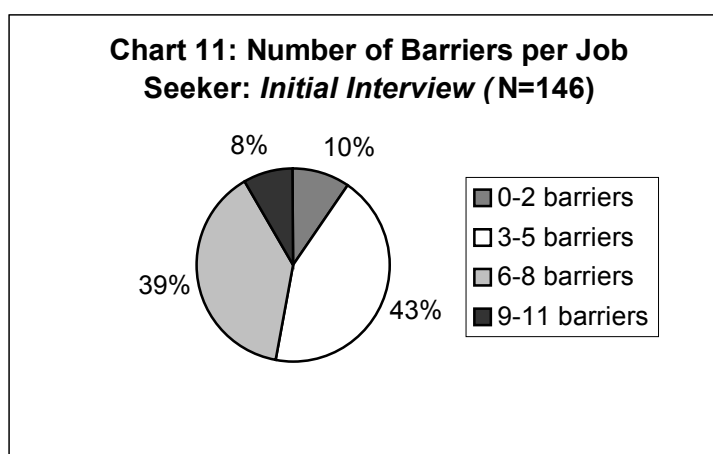
### *Workplace Discrimination*

As mentioned above, perceiving four or more experiences of workplace discrimination is significantly and negatively associated with working at least 20 hours per week. We did not directly ask about discrimination in our interviews. However, discrimination as a barrier did surface in job seekers discussions on barriers and why they left their last job. Approximately 3.4 percent reported it as a barrier, though this may be under-reported and is not accurately captured due to its omission from the formal interview forms.

## Number of Barriers

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The number and intensity of barriers a person has is often a predictor of success in obtaining or retaining a job for welfare recipients (Danziger, 2000). The population we interviewed self-reported a high number of barriers to employment. While our reliance on self-report methodology to capture barrier information may have under-reported some barriers and perhaps over-reported others, all in all we feel this is a good indication of obstacles these job seekers face in moving into and staying in the labor market. The vast majority of the job seekers interviewed have three or more barriers and many of these barriers are complicated and lasting. Many clearly inhibit people from getting a job (criminal record, lack of a high school diploma or GED, lack of a work history), and others become problems once people are employed (substance abuse, physical health, family circumstances). Many of the job seekers have both types.



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<sup>22</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.05 level ( $p = .039$ ).

The total number of barriers respondents exhibited was negatively correlated with employment, earnings, and job stability. That is, respondents who faced many barriers were less likely to be employed, earned less, and were more likely to experience job instability than respondents who faced fewer barriers. The relationship between total number of barriers and income from job was statistically significant<sup>23</sup> as was the relationship between total number of barriers and job instability<sup>24</sup>. Respondents experiencing high numbers of barriers were less likely to be employed, but this relationship was not statistically significant.

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<sup>23</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.05 level ( $p = .037$ ).

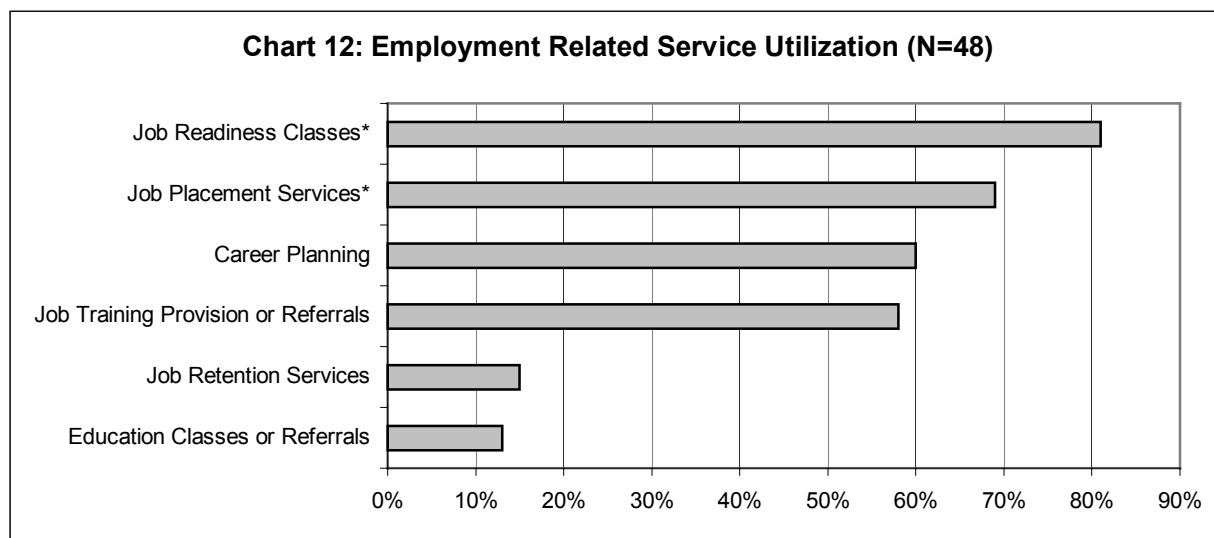
<sup>24</sup> This difference is significant at the 0.01 level ( $p = .006$ ).

# Service Utilization & Cost Analysis

In addition to providing an inside look at employment service programs and multi-barriered job seekers, one of the major focuses of this study is to provide in-depth data and analysis of the costs of providing employment and support services to single adults and non-custodial parents with multiple barriers to employment. Because we anticipated that these job seekers would face obstacles to obtaining and retaining employment, we believed it was likely that they would utilize a combination of public assistance and supportive services in their efforts to become employed. We have attempted to capture every single service the job seekers are utilizing ranging from the employment services, to the menu of support services offered by the employment programs (see **Figure 2**), to public benefits, housing subsidies, and mandated services. It is important to understand the full package of services these low-income job seekers are utilizing, in addition to understanding their employment efforts and outcomes. How they meet their basic needs as well as address their employment barriers within the current system can help us shape recommendations for system enhancements or additions to better meet their needs and improve outcomes.

## Utilization of Services Offered by the Employment Programs

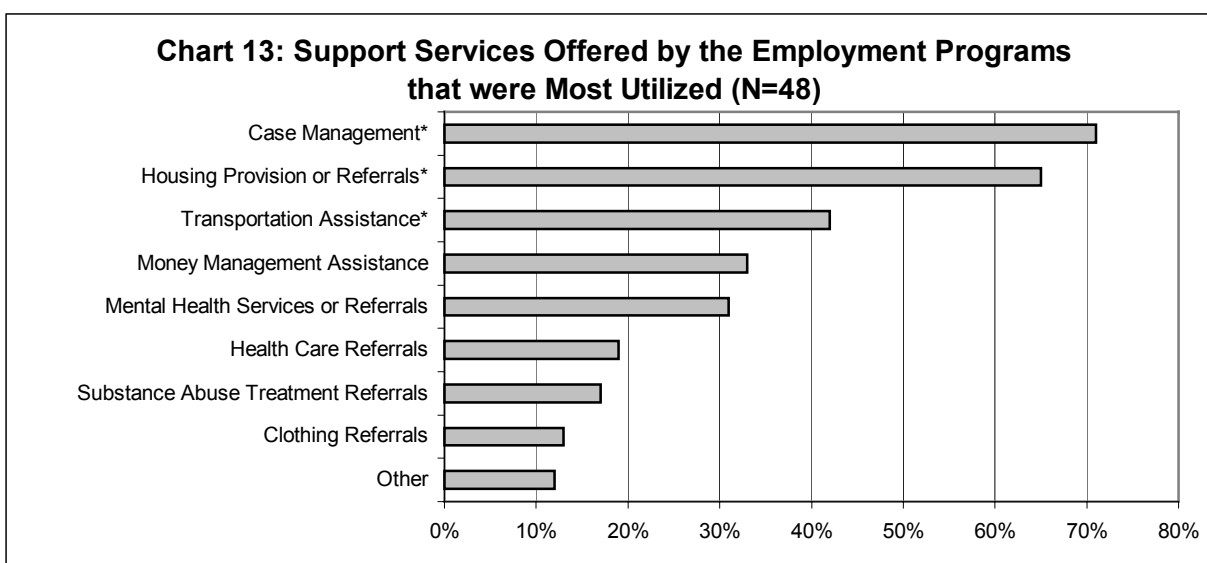
Following is a summary of employment related services and supportive services utilized by the job seekers during their enrollment in the employment programs. This information was collected from the longitudinal sample during the follow-up interviews. **Chart 12** provides information on utilization of employment related services and **Chart 13** provides support service utilization detail. The services and supports most helpful for job seekers in the context of their employment efforts are indicated by an asterisk in **Charts 12 and 13**. On average, the job seekers utilized a varied service package comprised of six services, though approximately one fifth (19%) of the job seekers report using a package comprised of only one to three services.



The employment-related services that were utilized the most and that were found most helpful by the job seekers in the context of their employment efforts were job readiness classes and job



placement services. The support services utilized the most and that were found most helpful by the job seekers in the context of their employment efforts were case management, housing or referrals to housing and transportation assistance.



In terms of preparing for employment, the job seekers report they would have benefited from more job placement services, job training, computer training, housing assistance, and a longer program length. Program administrators acknowledged that these improvements are needed but they are limited in what they can provide both by funding requirements and by capacity in terms of space, staff, expertise and funding.

At the time of the follow-up interviews, the services and support that were most needed by the job seekers included job placement services, housing assistance, health care, job training and education. These service needs resonate with the job seekers' employment barriers.

In conclusion, the job seekers repeatedly mentioned the importance of job training, job placement and housing assistance as continuing service needs. These services, along with the job readiness classes and transportation assistance, were the most valued. Some of the programs are able to provide continued job placement assistance and referrals to training and housing, but few are able to provide long-term financial support for the ongoing transportation and housing needs.

### Comprehensive Service Package Utilization

These job seekers, in addition to utilizing employment related and supportive services offered by their employment programs, were also linked to other support services. We collected detailed information on the services received by the job seekers in the month prior to the initial and follow-up interviews. **Table 4** provides detail on every service utilized by these multi-barriered job seekers including the employment related and supportive services. The percent of the job seekers who utilized each service in the month prior to the interview is presented. The sample sizes in the chart differ, with 146 people comprising the initial interviews, and 49 comprising the follow-up interviews.

**Table 4: Monthly Service Utilization Detail at Initial and Follow-up Interviews**

| <b>Service</b>                     | <b>Initial<br/>n=146</b> | <b>Follow-up<br/>n=49</b> | <b>Service</b>                     | <b>Initial<br/>n=146</b> | <b>Follow-up<br/>n=49</b> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Housing</b>                     |                          |                           | <b>Health Care</b>                 |                          |                           |
| Section 8                          | 1%                       | 2%                        | Free Medical Clinic                | 5%                       | 6%                        |
| Public Housing                     | 0%                       | 2%                        | Medicaid                           | 3%                       | 0%                        |
| Subsidized SRO                     | 4%                       | 10%                       | VA Medical Insurance               | 5%                       | 2%                        |
| Transitional Housing               | 8%                       | 4%                        | Cook County Hospital               | 10%                      | 10%                       |
| Shelter                            | 34%                      | 41%                       | <b>Corrections</b>                 |                          |                           |
| Halfway House                      | 32%                      | 0%                        | Incarcerated                       | 0%                       | 4%                        |
| Shared Housing                     | 14%                      | 24%                       | Parole                             | 37%                      | 14%                       |
| <b>Cash Assistance/Food stamps</b> |                          |                           | <b>Other Services</b>              |                          |                           |
| Earnfare                           | 10%                      | 4%                        | Transportation Assistance          | 23%                      | 6%                        |
| Transitional Assistance            | 1%                       | 0%                        | Clothing Assistance                | 33%                      | 2%                        |
| Food stamps                        | 38%                      | 63%                       | Food Pantry                        | 10%                      | 2%                        |
| <b>Substance Abuse Treatment</b>   |                          |                           | Legal Assistance                   | 6%                       | 8%                        |
| Outpatient Counseling              | 28%                      | 2%                        | <b>Employment Related Services</b> |                          |                           |
| AA/NA                              | 66%                      | 51%                       | Case Management                    | 78%                      | 45%                       |
| Inpatient Treatment                | 2%                       | 2%                        | Employment Services                | 100%                     | 12%                       |
| <b>Mental Health</b>               |                          |                           | Training Services                  | 5%                       | 8%                        |
| Outpatient Treatment               | 12%                      | 2%                        | Education Services                 | 6%                       | 8%                        |

The number and type of services and supports utilized by multi-barriered job seekers can be extensive, but as shown in the area of health care, not always extensive enough to meet the job seekers needs. In many of the categories, more of the job seekers utilized services at the time of the initial interview than at the follow-up interview. We speculate that this service utilization decrease is in part linked to the employment program ending and consequently many of the job seekers losing contact with their case manager. Without the referral and linkage function provided by the case manager, it appears that some services become harder to access or are unavailable such as transportation assistance. At the initial interview, nearly two thirds (78%) of the job seekers received case management services, with the majority meeting weekly with their case manager. At follow-up, this dropped to 45 percent.

These case managers play a crucial role in linking job seekers with many of the services summarized in **Table 4**. We discovered this through interviews with program staff as well as through the time tracking of employment program staff to understand the breakdown of services rendered. These data allowed for analysis of service operations and staffing, and specifically, a picture of the apportionment of employee's time. Key employment service staff and case managers at two organizations where we completed the majority of the interviews filled out detailed daily time records for approximately four consecutive weeks.

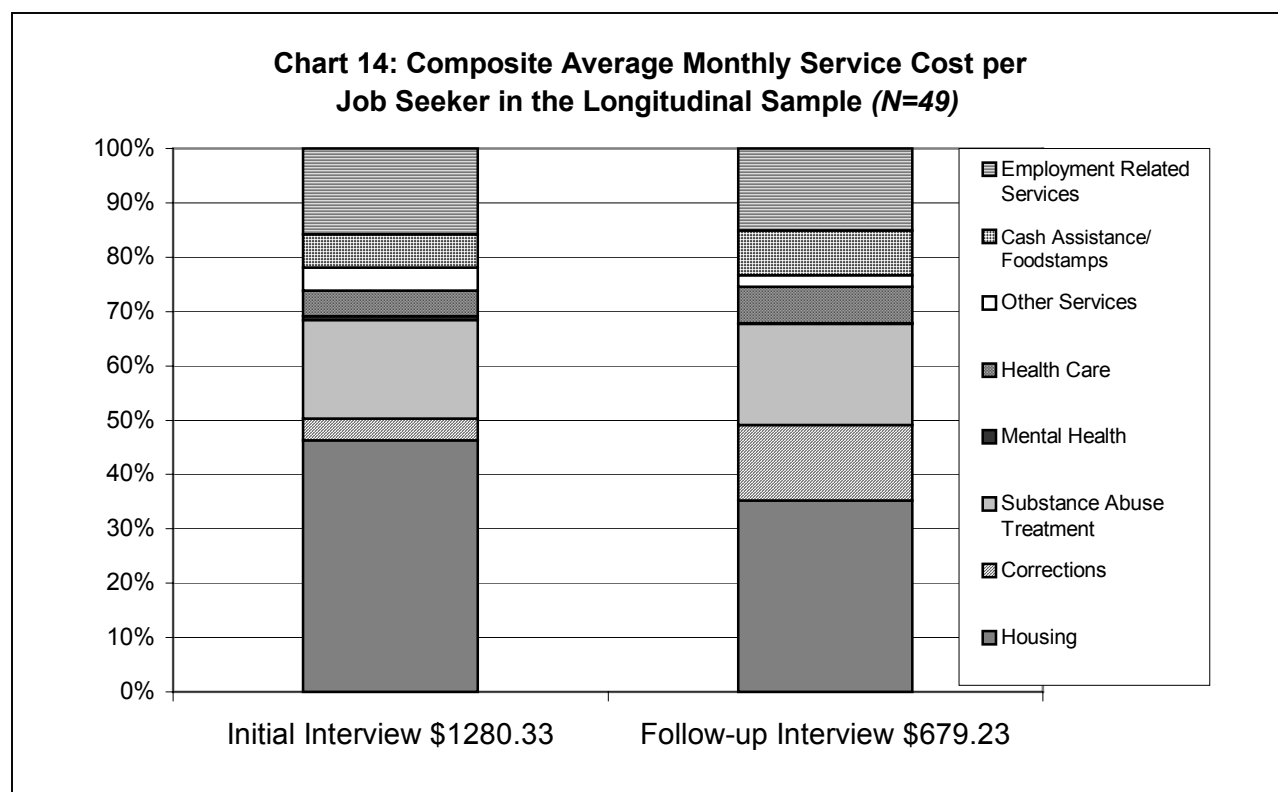
This decrease in service utilization is also related to the fact that the job seekers may no longer be in need of the assistance or they completed the service, such as outpatient substance abuse services, or need them to a lesser extent, such as AA/NA meetings.

## Comprehensive Service Package Costs

In order to help us further understand the characteristics of service bundling we estimated the total costs of services utilized by these job seekers. For the employment related program services, program budgets and the client caseload sizes were used to determine costs per program participant and, where appropriate, units of service, of the three participating organizations where we completed the largest number of interviews. As mentioned earlier, all of the programs that participated in this study use a basic employment services model with the addition of either short or long-term case management services. A striking similarity between the program budgets was that over half (56%) of the budgets were allocated to case management, despite differences in the length of time case management is provided. In the short-term programs more of the budget (31%) was allocated to employment services and less (13%) to education and job training. In the long-term programs less was allocated to employment services (18%), and more to job training and education (26%). For the programs that did not provide job training and education, more money was spent on employment services.

Estimates for the cost of services that job seekers are using outside of the employment programs were determined through a sampling of at least two diverse providers of each service type. Providers were identified primarily by job seekers who named the service providers they relied upon during the interviews. Costing figures were calculated from annual reports or from direct figures supplied by the providers. Then these figures were compiled into an average unit cost.

**Chart 14** shows the average cost per month, per job seeker, for all of the services utilized and the percent breakdown of the composite cost into the eight service categories detailed in **Table**



4.<sup>25</sup> The average cost per month, per job seeker, for all of the services utilized at the initial interview is \$1,280, nearly twice as high as the costs of services utilized at follow-up, \$679. This cost decrease reflects the service utilization decrease shown in **Table 4**. For example, in the ‘other services’ category, a much higher percentage of job seekers utilized services at the time of the initial interview than at follow-up, and the costs in that category decreased to reflect this. **Table 5** outlines the percent change in costs between the initial and follow-up interviews. Approximately 15 percent of the job seekers service package costs are in the area of employment services. Less than 10 percent of their package costs are in cash assistance and food stamps. That leaves the bulk of the costs (75%) in categories that are linked with many of their employment barriers shown in **Chart 10**.

At the time of both the initial and follow-up interviews, approximately half of the costs were from housing and corrections, and the other half from the other six categories. The corrections costs increased greatly at follow-up, as two of the job seekers were incarcerated. The housing costs decreased as job seekers reached their time limit in the short-term and transitional housing programs that they resided in at the initial interview and began to double up with friends and family.

| <b>Table 5: Percent change in service utilization costs from initial interview to follow-up interview (N=49)</b> |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Service Category</b>  | <b>Percent Change</b> |
| Employment Related   | -5%                   |
| Cash Assistance/Food stamps  | 36%                   |
| Other Services   | -50%                  |
| Health Care  | 45%                   |
| Substance Abuse Treatment  | 3%                    |
| Corrections  | 245%                  |
| Housing  | -24%                  |

As mentioned earlier, at the time of the follow-up interviews, the services and support that were most needed by the job seekers included employment related services (job placement services, job training and education) housing assistance, and health care. As shown in **Tables 4** and **5**, utilization of all of these services decreased with the exception of health care. We can only speculate as to the reasons for this decrease. It could be related to a number of factors including limited service availability, waiting lists, lessened need, limited access to services, restrictive eligibility criteria, hours of service operation interfere with work schedule, and lack of job seeker knowledge of service existence.

There were differences in service utilization and costs for different groupings of the job seekers. The most noteworthy differences were in the housing assistance category. For example, job seekers with incomes above the federal poverty line received more housing assistance than those with incomes below the federal poverty line. Job seekers with a criminal record received much less in housing assistance than those without a criminal record. Finally, those who were employed received more housing assistance and less health care assistance than those who were unemployed.

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<sup>25</sup> All of the services in **Table 4** are included in the composite cost except for shared housing. We were unable to estimate the cost of this ‘unofficial’ subsidy provided by friends and family. It is a critical contribution and consideration should be given in future research to developing a methodology to capture the magnitude, burden and benefit of this subsidy.



# Analysis & Recommendations

Based on analysis of findings from the interviews with low-income single adults and non-custodial parent job seekers, as well as extensive interviews with program operators, experts in certain fields and a thorough literature review, we have come to a number of conclusions about the situations faced by these job seekers and the programs and systems serving them. What follows is a summary of conclusions as well as recommendations to address these conclusions for consideration by policy makers, elected officials, funders, agency directors and program operators. The recommendations have depth and breadth as they address both program and policy issues, and range from local to federal jurisdiction in terms of decision making power. In sum, the conclusions and recommendations represent a comprehensive approach that is necessary to truly address the needs of low-income adults with multiple employment barriers.

## CONCLUSION 1: FLEXIBLE SERVICES ARE KEY TO SUCCESS

**Successful programs provide flexible and comprehensive employment services.**

The programs that participated in this study rely on a number of components that appear to lead to successful outcomes for job seekers with multiple employment barriers. They utilize an expanded employment services model that includes provision of or referral to wrap-around services that address many of the barriers to employment. On-site service provision and tight linkages to outside providers increase the effectiveness of these wrap-around services. Finally, long term availability of follow-up services appears to enhance both barrier reduction and employment stability. Outcomes from these programs include a high post-program job placement rate (61%), an increase in the percent of participants who have income from 31 percent to 65 percent, and an increase in the average monthly income from \$193 to \$549.

Components contributing to these successful outcomes include an up front thorough assessment to determine flow of services, intensive case management, service continuity, and long-term follow-up programming that continues well after the participant gains their first job. One of the most important conclusions from employment and training programs in the last few decades is that, in addition to specific employment and training and support services, providing case management services per se is important to the success of a program (Maxfield, 1990). The services valued most highly by these job seekers include job training, job placement, housing assistance, job readiness classes and transportation assistance.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *Invest in the development of expanded program models using the existing programs as a guide.* Programs that are interested in serving job seekers with multiple employment barriers should consider adopting the extended employment services model with the following components: comprehensive support services available in one location or tight linkages with outside providers, provision of long-term ongoing support, setting

short-term and intermediate goals in order to immediately start reducing barriers, and highly individualized pathways – i.e. order of service receipt will vary by person as determined by thorough and on-going assessment.

**CONCLUSION 2: SAFETY NET AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES  
ARE LIMITED AND LIMITING**

**Current safety net and workforce development policies do not address the  
employment needs of individuals with multiple employment barriers.**

Many of the 146 job seekers we interviewed were marginally employable or temporarily unemployable due to a multitude of barriers - barriers that by themselves may not prevent employment but in combination can. The total number of barriers respondents experienced was negatively correlated with employment, earnings, and job stability. That is, respondents who faced many barriers were less likely to be employed, and when employed earned less, and were more likely to experience job instability than respondents who faced fewer barriers. Our findings indicate that, at program entry, it was unrealistic to expect most of the multi-barriered job seekers to meet their needs solely from employment income, and it was unreasonable to assume that they had another way of making ends meet.

In **Figure 4** that follows, this group of multi-barriered job seekers falls primarily into the able-bodied non-custodial parent and single adult columns. Despite this group's lack of work readiness most of its members with high numbers of barriers to employment do not qualify for any type of cash assistance. The current public assistance system for low-income non-custodial parents and childless adults is arranged such that unless an individual is disabled<sup>26</sup> or falls into a very narrow category, they are considered able to work.

**Figure 4: Low-Income Employability/Eligibility Continuum**

| <i>Low-Income<br/>Groups</i>          | Able –<br>Bodied<br>Custodial<br>Parents | Able-Bodied<br>Non-<br>Custodial<br>Parents | Able-Bodied<br>Childless<br>Adults | Temporarily<br>Unemployable | Disabled |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| <i>Assistance Programs</i>            |  |   |                                    |                             |          |
| Food stamps                           | X  | X   | X                                  | X                           | X        |
| SSI                                   |  |   |                                    |                             | X        |
| TANF                                  | X  |   |                                    |                             |          |
| Medicaid                              | X  |   |                                    |                             | X        |
| Transitional Assistance <sup>27</sup> |  |   |                                    | X                           |          |
| AABD <sup>28</sup>                    |  |   |                                    |                             | X        |

<sup>26</sup> The term disability, in accordance with the Social Security Act as amended, means an inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. For further detail on this definition see **Appendix C**.

In the past when the General Assistance (GA) program was still in operation, there was more flexibility in who could receive assistance. Those deemed unemployable did not have to have been found disabled to receive assistance, though when the GA program ended in Illinois as well as other states, ‘the definitions of employability used by the states proved arbitrary, as they had little to do with individuals’ actual ability to work or to locate a job in the local economy, and did not reflect either labor market conditions or the numerous personal and structural barriers GA recipients face to employment’ (Hauser, 1994).

Low-income job seekers who cannot maintain employment have no other reliable source of income with which to meet their needs and are often forced to seek services within the homeless service system. And, in order for them to successfully enter the job market and become self-sufficient, they may require a wide range of support services over a period of time. For some job seekers, the transition to employment could take considerably longer than most of the current publicly funded programs and allow.

In addition to the lack of attention paid to multi-barriered job seekers in safety net policies, current workforce development policies are often not implemented or structured in ways that support these job seekers’ efforts at achieving self-sufficiency. Several workforce development policies with a work first emphasis do not allow for intensive service provision and instead stress rapid labor force attachment. While this has value for many job seekers, and is in fact what they desire, it does not enhance employment stability for the majority of multi-barriered job seekers, specifically those with barriers to retaining a job. Work first strategies also do not address their need for attaining higher skills to get higher wages and benefits that lead to self-sufficiency.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, went into effect nationwide in July 2000, replacing the Job Training Partnership Act as the primary national job training funding source. WIA allows states to provide intensive employment services and training to individuals based on need and identifies self-sufficiency as a goal. Eligibility for services is defined locally. However, early field reports from across the country indicate that limited funds and the permeation of work first strategies have resulted in most individual's rapid attachment into low-wage jobs (Patrick, 2001).

- ◆ ***Recommendation: A combination of services and income support should be provided during the period of time in which individuals are engaging in job search, skills development and barrier reduction activities and should remain available at a reduced level after employment is secured, in order to promote sustained employment by addressing temporary crises.*** This income support can take many forms including an expanded transitional

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<sup>27</sup> Transitional Assistance is available only to single individuals who have not been found eligible for SSI and who are found by IDHS ‘not employable’. Some of the ways a person can be found ‘not employable’ are if they are: age 55 or older and meet a means test; or are required to take prescription medication to control seizures, severe high blood pressure or diabetes; or are homeless due to a court ordered evacuation (non-payment of rent evictions are not covered), domestic violence, fire or natural disaster; or are temporarily ill or incapacitated. The maximum benefit is \$100 per month plus limited coverage for basic medical services.

<sup>28</sup> The AABD program provides cash assistance persons who meet certain income requirements and who are elderly, blind or disabled (based on the Social Security Administration’s definition of disability).



assistance program, training stipends, and expansion of the unemployment insurance program. Such support should be enough to cover temporary housing, medical and other needs related to becoming self-sufficient.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *Employment programs and funders should allow time for assessments, interventions based on that assessment and make provisions for those who require long-term programming.* Barrier reduction activities should count as a work activity for those whose multiple barriers severely inhibit employment. Work first strategies that push people into work before services are provided set many of these multi-barriered job seekers up to fail.
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *Programs and government agencies need to ensure that low-income individuals are linked to the benefits that they are eligible for, including food stamps, Transitional Assistance, the Earned Income Tax Credit and SSI.*
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *A safety net system apart from the homeless service system needs to be in place to support those job seekers who are unable to secure employment but who are not disabled by Social Security Act standards; revised criteria should be used by the Illinois Department of Human Services that takes into account additional employability factors.* A University of Michigan study on barriers and welfare recipients report that of those recipients who reported seven or more of the 14 barriers they examined, virtually none were predicted to be employed. The study found that their multiple barriers make it unlikely that an employer will hire them or that they will be able to hold a job for a sustained period of time.

### **CONCLUSION 3: INAPPROPRIATE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS EXIST**

**Providers serving multi-barriered job seekers find it difficult to meet existing performance standards linked to workforce development funding.**

At the time of the follow-up interviews, the services and support that were most needed by the job seekers included job placement services, job training and education. These service needs resonate with the employment barriers that the job seekers are facing and with their wage needs. They will be able to command a higher wage with higher skills. Despite the need for additional training, there are limited training opportunities for multi-barriered job seekers.

Much of the job training and job readiness program funding that exists is limited by funder requirements that mandate quick placement into jobs and offer little in the way of skill upgrade or retention services. Contract deliverables often require participant employment within 30 days of program enrollment or program completion followed by 90-day job retention. Mainstream programs often address these deliverables though entry requirements that screen out multi-barriered job seekers – for example minimum reading and math test scores and/or GED

certificates or High School diplomas, or completion of a drug rehabilitation program if needed. Programs that do serve these job seekers have strategies that address multiple employment barriers but rarely access public workforce development funding as it does not allow programs to work with participants long enough to ensure employment stability and attainment of self-sufficiency.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *Federal and state agencies that fund training should establish more flexible performance measures that include interim measurements for programs working with job seekers with multiple employment barriers.* Measures could include a set of baseline standards such as job placement after a longer period of program involvement (120 days or 180 days) and completion of program components (job training, substance abuse treatment), coupled with individualized progress measures such as advancement made toward addressing barriers as documented in individual employability plans.

#### **CONCLUSION 4: AFFORDABLE HOUSING, HEALTH CARE AND TRANSPORTATION ACCESS ARE ESSENTIALS**

**Employment success is dependent on meeting  
housing, health care and transportation needs.**

Barriers identified by the job seekers in this study often involved a lack tangible resources to meet basic needs. These resources needed include affordable housing, transportation options, and health insurance coverage.

*1. Affordable Housing:* The job seekers interviewed identified affordable housing as their most critical need. A rental market analysis completed in the Chicago region in 1999 found that the region is over 153,000 affordable units short of what is needed (Metropolitan Planning Council, 1999). In addition, housing costs have risen much faster than wages, so even many who work full time cannot afford to pay rent. While many of the job seekers we interviewed had access to short-term housing assistance, few were able to secure permanent affordable housing once the short-term assistance ended. When the assistance ended their living arrangements, even once employed, became increasingly tenuous. Many moved to a shelter, into a shared living situation with friends or family, or onto the streets. Even if those who were working could find an apartment with rent at the fair market rent rate, they could not afford to pay the rent based on their wages and hours. Their average monthly income of \$545 is inadequate to pay the Fair Market Rent in Chicago, which for a studio apartment is \$551.

Often homeless service providers become the default safety net for those with no entitlement to cash assistance and who have been unsuccessful in employment since loss of housing often comes hand in hand with loss of, or inability to gain, employment. A study of the early impacts of SSI benefit elimination found that shelter providers reported that former recipients stay in shelters was greatly prolonged as they were unable to secure permanent housing due to a lack of

income (Mason, 1998). Another study on the impacts of welfare reform in Chicago found that in 1999 more families were becoming homeless because of changes in welfare law that have led to an increase in lost benefits and a policy of pushing people into work without proper preparation or adequate supports (Dworkin, 2000).

- ◆ **Recommendation: *More permanent affordable units need to be built or set-aside in Chicago.*** This has been done in other states and localities through tax incentives for developers, mandates such as one for one replacement of affordable units for units lost to redevelopment or the investment of more money into development of new units. Job seekers who successfully complete programs but who cannot find an affordable place to live have an increased chance of job instability, homelessness, substance abuse relapse and recidivism into the corrections system.
- ◆ **Recommendation: *More supportive housing units should be created that target and assist adults with multiple barriers.*** The supportive housing model generally provides long-term, decent and safe rental housing with rent usually no more than 30% of the tenant's income. The programs provide central coordination of services that tenants need to become stable, with some services on site and others available in the surrounding community. These services often include access to chemical dependency treatment and support, mental health counseling, and job training and support. An evaluation of the supportive housing demonstration found a retention/success rate of 84.5 percent (HUD, 1994), and an evaluation of the Next Step: Jobs initiative, a supportive housing based employment strategy found that the rate of employment doubled among tenants compared to their employment rate one year before their entry into supportive housing (Long, 1999).
- ◆ **Recommendation: *The Homelessness Prevention Program funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services should be expanded.*** The Homelessness Prevention Program is designed to prevent homelessness for people who are at risk of homelessness and need financial assistance for a short period of time. The financial assistance can be used in many ways including rent and utility assistance, legal assistance in eviction/housing court, and landlord/tenant mediation. This program could help many of these job seekers retain their jobs by maintaining their housing and could also help them keep their housing during short periods of unemployment.
- ◆ **Recommendation: *The federal minimum wage should be increased and indexed to inflation and consideration should be given to making it a living wage (typically set at level that a full-time, full year worker must earn to lift a family of 4 out of poverty).*** Few of the jobs held by these job seekers pay wages that cover even the fair market rent, let alone other needs.

2. *Medical Coverage:* Health care was one of the services that the job seekers were most in need of at the time of the follow-up interview. Many of the specific health issues that these job seekers have are chronic and very few of them have health insurance coverage. A recent study found that uninsured people with chronic health conditions (heart disease, hypertension, arthritis, chronic back pain, high blood pressure) visit health care providers less often than insured people with these conditions and are much more likely to go without medicines that are essential to maintaining their health and functioning than the insured with such conditions (Parcham, 2001). The job seekers in this study relied primarily on emergency rooms for their care, which are the most expensive points of care.

One third of the job seekers reported that poor health has inhibited their employment efforts. Research has consistently demonstrated a positive association between employment and health and our study found that the amount of monthly employment earnings was significantly negatively correlated with poor overall health, which includes mental health, substance abuse and physical health.

It is unlikely that these multi-barriered job seekers will receive health insurance coverage from their employer, assuming they secure lasting employment. Low wage workers are much less likely to be offered coverage through the workplace than are higher paid workers: 93 percent of U.S. workers who earn more than \$15 an hour are offered health insurance by their employer, whereas only 43 percent of those earning \$7 or less are offered such coverage (Cooper, 1997). The majority of the participants in this study who were employed were earning \$7.00 or less per hour.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The state of Illinois, in conjunction with the federal government, should offer expanded coverage through the Medicaid program.* The state of New York received a Medicaid waiver to provide insurance through its Family Health Plus plan to uninsured single adults and parents in May 2001. The waiver will cover childless adults at or below the poverty level and uninsured parents at 120 percent of the federal poverty level (with gradual expansions for the parent group up to 150 percent of poverty by October, 2002). In addition, the states of Delaware, Hawaii, Minnesota, Oregon, Tennessee, and Vermont have used section 1115 waivers (authorized by Section 1115 of the Social Security Act) to significantly expand coverage beyond what is allowed by traditional Medicaid (Krebs-Carter, 2000).
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The Illinois General Assembly should consider legislation to assist small businesses that cannot afford coverage for their employees in offering health insurance.* A bill pending in the New York state legislature would require commercial health plans to offer business with fewer than 50 employees, or groups of employers working in such businesses a chance to buy inexpensive coverage subsidized by the state (Steinhauer, 2001). Alternatively, a program could be modeled on the state of Illinois' KidCare Rebate plan that would help employees who are offered insurance by their employers but cannot afford it, cover some or all of their insurance premiums.

3. *Transportation*: Both the job seekers and the programs serving them emphasized the importance of finding ways to address transportation barriers. The transportation barriers included inability to pay for public transportation, lack of a car, limited or no public transportation that reaches suburban job sites, service hours of public transportation do not match with job hours, and finally, the length of travel from home to work is prohibitive.

Many of these barriers are related to access to suburban jobs. Many businesses in the Chicago region have relocated from the city to the suburbs over the last few decades. For example, Illinois Department of Employment Security data shows that during the period of 1990-1998 the number of jobs in the counties around Chicago grew and DuPage County alone reported having 7,241 entry-level job openings that they could not fill (Wage Gap, 3/19/00). Since most low skilled workers reside in the city, and many low skilled jobs are now in the suburbs, transportation to these sites is a crucial link that has not been fully developed.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *Funding should be made available to workforce development and social service agencies so they can distribute transit fare.* One way of assisting programs that distribute transit fare would be transit providers offering non-profit agencies fare cards at reduced rates.
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *A coordinated public transportation fare system should be created in addition to an increase in connection points between the CTA, PACE and Metra systems. This will alleviate excessive travel times, increase ridership, and in general increase mobility and access across the region, regardless of income.* There is only a minimal focus in the Chicago region on access to suburban jobs via mass transit. Inadequate connectivity and fare coordination across the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) transit systems (Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra and PACE) are one piece of the problem. While the CTA and PACE users can share fare cards across systems, the Metra commuter train system remains isolated. In addition, there are numerous spots throughout the region where CTA-Metra interchanges could be built, greatly increasing access to jobs and ridership.
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *A transportation funding source that can be used innovatively by a broad range of players should be created at the state level to help increase access to job centers.* Many communities throughout Illinois have found that expanding their current transportation services to reach more employees or employers is cost prohibitive and something they cannot sustain without additional funding. A new funding source could provide grants to communities to create programs that support the transportation needs of low-income workers in their areas. Funds should be available for a wide range of uses including vanpools and car loan or donation programs.

The state of Wisconsin has created such a funding source called the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP). WETAP is a coordinated grant program that draws upon multiple funding sources to develop employment transportation solutions throughout Wisconsin. In 2000, Wisconsin combined TANF and Transportation Demand Management (Department of Transportation funds) dollars to fund 21 grants in 45 counties.

## CONCLUSION 5: FOOD STAMPS ARE PIVOTAL

**The food stamp program is a key component of the safety net for low-income job seekers with multiple employment barriers.**

Just over a third (38%) of the job seekers received food stamps at the initial interview. When food stamps are added to the income mix their average income increased from \$179 to \$228 and the median increased from \$0 to \$127. With the longitudinal sample, the percent receiving food stamps increased to 63 percent. This increase occurred concurrently with a large increase in employment and employment related income, indicating that basic needs were not being met solely through employment income. The average income received in the month prior to the interview was \$545 and when food stamps are added to the mix, the average monthly income increases to \$598.

It was estimated in 1997 that 14 percent of Illinois' food stamp caseload were able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD). As of June 2000 there were 364,834 households receiving food stamps. To give an idea of the scope of low-income single adults we used the same 14 percent estimate to determine that there may have been roughly 51,000 ABAWDs on the caseload in 2000. In addition, as we found through our interviews, there is also a large group of food stamp eligible ABAWDs who are not enrolled in the program. A study on food stamp program leavers in Illinois found that ABAWDs who left the food stamp program were more likely than others to face serious hardships such as extreme poverty, severe hunger, homelessness and lack of health insurance (Rangarajan, 2001).

The federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 imposed changes in food stamp law that affects ABAWDs. Food stamps are now time limited for able-bodied childless adults under age 50 who are not working. They can only receive food stamps for 3 out of 36 months unless they are working or in a work program at least 20 hours per week. Illinois has received exemptions for some areas due to high unemployment (52 counties, 18 cities, 180 municipalities as of 1/01), the city of Chicago included. Studies have found that 18 to 49 year old single adults subject to this provision are much poorer than the food stamp population in general, and have very low skills (Stavrianos, 1998).

In addition to food stamp program participation, one-third of the sample had participated previously or at the time of the interviews in the state's Earnfare program, and nearly one-third (31.3%) of the Earnfare participants in our sample have participated in the program more than once. Earnfare is a work experience program funded through food stamp employment and training dollars that allows enrollees to work off their food stamps and then earn up to \$294 per month in a subsidized job. Some of the job seekers used the Earnfare program regularly as a safety net and primary income source when they repeatedly failed at securing unsubsidized employment. Only 10.4 percent of the Earnfare placements led to a permanent job for the participant.

Throughout the state of Illinois in fiscal year 2000, 96 percent of the ABAWDs who enrolled in food stamp employment and training programs were in Earnfare, and 3.7 percent in other programs in the average month for a total of 3,846 people per month served.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The reauthorization of Food Stamps in 2002 should restore the full food stamp entitlement to able-bodied adults without dependents. No one who is unable to work should lose food stamps.* The food stamp program should lift work requirements and time limits as 18 to 49 year old ABAWDs are disadvantaged and can face major difficulties in the labor market (Stavrianos, 1998).
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The state of Illinois should develop a comprehensive training program utilizing the federal and state Food Stamp Employment and Training Program dollars targeted at low-income single adults with multiple employment barriers.* The bulk of the states expenditure of this money right now is on Earnfare. The state should reconsider the needs of the low-income job seekers and draw on successful existing program models to design a program that will result in permanent job placements that pay an adequate wage. The Earnfare program does not lead to self-sufficiency for many multi-barriered job seekers. Consideration should be given to a flexible program design that includes case management provision.

Two strategies that build on efforts to help the disabled find permanent employment should be considered by the state to address the needs of job seekers with multiple employment barriers: supported transitional structured employment programs (subsidized) and supported competitive employment programs (unsubsidized). In these programs the emphasis is on a good job match, coupled with the provision of significant support to facilitate the transition to work. These work based program models have been preliminarily assessed by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and job placement and retention data suggest that some of the programs who used these models were successful interventions (Pavetti, 2001).

#### **CONCLUSION 6: SERVICE AND SYSTEMS INTEGRATION IS CURRENTLY LACKING**

**Integration between the homeless, workforce development, corrections, and substance abuse treatment systems is essential for program efficiency and effectiveness.**

The multi-barriered job seekers utilized a combination of public assistance and supportive services in their employment efforts. On average, the job seekers utilized a varied service package comprised of six services while they were enrolled in the employment programs, in conjunction with a myriad of outside support services. Often programs working with job seekers with multiple barriers have to seek separate funding sources for each type of service (e.g. housing, transportation, job readiness classes, case management) and each funder has different

expectations in terms of who can be served and for how long. This makes it difficult for programs to craft individualized service plans that attempt to address specific barriers. Separate funding sources also impose limitations on what categories of people are eligible for each service type – which makes operating a wrap-around service program logistically nearly impossible, creates economic inefficiencies and at the very least a financial burden on the organization.

- ◆ **Recommendation: *Flexible funding sources need to be established, as they are a necessity for programs serving multi-barriered job seekers.*** Given the number of job seekers who have multiple barriers and hence multiple service needs, funds need to deliver resources across traditional service area divisions for maximum impact. For example, it has been found that substance abuse treatment is more effective if employment training occurs concurrently (Wright, 1990, Schecter, 1973)

Several state entities in Massachusetts recently developed a mixed funding stream to serve the employment efforts of people with developmental disabilities. This came about through many years of collaborative meetings where the various agencies devised a manageable, cooperative arrangement of financing where community based organizations charge the same amount for certain pre-approved services. This mixed funding stream is an outcome based payment system that allows funding to be assigned to developmentally disabled individuals who can choose their service components as well as providers (Brown, 1999).

- ◆ **Recommendation: *Connections should be facilitated between substance abuse treatment providers, corrections departments, community based organizations and community colleges to provide job readiness classes and linkages to training and education.*** Connections include interagency partnerships, co-location of service staff, transportation to other service sites, or provision of additional services. In New York, the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services has joined with the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities to integrate short-term vocational training into residential drug treatment so people are prepared to seek employment upon completion of treatment. The community colleges provide the training specifically for nursing assistants, clerical/word processing and food service work (Kramer, 1998).

A new demonstration program, CASAWORKS for Families, is a community-based collaboration of local organizations including those providing substance abuse treatment, mental health services, literacy and job training, work experience and placement services, employers, local public and private service agencies and welfare departments. The National Center Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University launched this project in January 1999. It is operating at 11 sites in nine different states. The program integrates drug treatment, job and parenting training in a unique cooperative effort of federal and local government and public and private agencies, for mothers who are long-term public assistance recipients ([www.casaworks.org](http://www.casaworks.org)).



## **CONCLUSION 7: CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SYSTEMS NEED ENHANCEMENT**

**Criminal justice and substance abuse treatment systems do not provide sufficient supports for community stabilization and self-sufficiency.**

The job seekers interviewed for this study have considerable contact with the criminal justice and substance abuse treatment systems. Their repeated contacts with these systems suggest that, to a certain extent, these systems are falling short in assisting participants to stabilize in the community and become self-sufficient.

*1. Criminal Justice System:* Over half (61%) of the job seekers have a felony conviction, most report that it has been a barrier to securing employment, and over one third (37.5%) of the entire sample was on parole at the initial interview. Job instability was significantly negatively correlated with having a criminal record. The job seekers who had had a greater number of jobs in the six months prior to the follow-up interview were more likely than those who had fewer jobs to have a criminal record.

Having a criminal record poses a range of problems when seeking employment including stigma and stereotyping on behalf of employers, the job seeker having little or sporadic work history due to time in prison, regulations that bar hiring people with some convictions in certain jobs, and many offenders are unprepared when they leave prison in terms of support systems, housing and employment. This is further complicated by substance abuse. The vast majority (82%) of those we interviewed who had a criminal record also identified substance abuse as a current or past issue. According to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), Human Services Plan 1998-2000 this rate of substance abuse is higher than that of the Illinois prison population as a whole, with 70 percent of all inmates admitted to prisons reporting use of drugs or alcohol.

Employment and substance abuse treatment have been found to discourage crime and recidivism. Offenders with stable employment are much less likely to violate parole or to re-offend (Motiuk, 1996). Likewise, a study of a program in the R. J. Donovan Prison in San Diego found that of inmates who completed treatment in prison and then went through an after care program outside of prison, only 27 percent were returned to prison after three years. By comparison in a control group of inmates who did not participate in treatment, or refused after care, 75 percent ended up back in prison (Buck, 2000). Additional recent research indicates that prison-based treatment can significantly reduce recidivism and drug relapses, particularly if it is combined with pre-release training and planning and community-based aftercare services, including assistance with housing, education, employment and health care (Belenko, 1998).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 82 percent of people nationwide on parole who are returned to prison are drug and alcohol abusers, 40 percent are unemployed, and about 75 percent have not completed high school (Butterfield, 2000). But, over the past 20 years there have been major reductions in in-prison services such as education, skills training, and job

preparation. (Buck, 2000). The number of state prison inmates participating in drug treatment programs dropped to 1 in 10 in 1997 from 1 in 4 in 1991 and only 9 percent of prisoners are in full-time job training or education programs (Butterfield, 2000). The IDOC Human Services Plan 1998-2000 reports that the current level of substance abuse programs in the corrections system do not fill the need for a full continuum of care for offenders in need of and amenable to treatment. Slightly more than 3,100 treatment beds are currently available in the Illinois prison system for the estimated 27,000 adult and juvenile offenders in need.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *Drug and alcohol treatment should be available to all prisoners who need it.* Expanded resources should be made available from federal, state and local budgets to provide substantive drug treatment to all inmates with drug use histories. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the cost of effective treatment ranges from \$1,800 to \$6,800 per year while the national average for the cost of incarceration is \$20,805 per year (Belenko, 1998). Offenders leaving prison are more likely to have success in the labor market if they have addressed their substance abuse issues.
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The state of Illinois and local governments should increase alternatives to incarceration, utilizing diversion programs and drug courts and modifying mandatory sentencing laws.* The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority has stated that while mandatory sentencing may be necessary for specific offenses, it is important to consider whether drug treatment programs or alternative sentencing would be more beneficial and cost effective for low-level offenders (Smith, 1998). Efforts are currently underway in the New York legislature to expand treatment options for drug offenders and to give judges more discretion in sentencing. In addition, on July 1, 2001, Proposition 36 goes into effect in California, which is to provide treatment instead of prison for first and second time offenders who are not charged with other crimes (Butterfield, 2001). By diverting low-level offenders from prison into treatment, they are more likely to address their problems, they become less severed from their support networks, and are more prepared to seek employment after completing treatment and related services.
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The Illinois Department of Corrections, in conjunction with city and state human services providers should provide comprehensive pre-release planning and aftercare services.* Pre-release planning and aftercare services create continuity between program activities inside and outside of prison by assisting parolees in locating treatment services, employment and housing. CASA estimates that it would cost an extra \$6,500 per year to provide an inmate with a year of residential treatment and ancillary services, such as vocational training and education, counseling, and after-care case management. For each successful inmate, the benefits for the first year after release should total about \$68,000. If only 10 percent are successful, there will still be a positive economic return. For every 10,000 successful drug-addicted inmates, there should be a decrease of one million crimes per year (Belenko, 1998).

2. *Substance Abuse Treatment System:* The interference of substance use with employment was the second most commonly reported barrier by the job seekers - nearly three fourths of them identified it as a problem. In addition, job instability was significantly negatively correlated with substance use. Job seekers who had had a greater number of jobs in the past six months at the time of the follow-up interview were more likely than those who had fewer jobs to face barriers in the area of substance use. Many had engaged in recovery programs in the past, often multiple times and many had continued contact with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).

Inpatient treatment has been found to be effective in many respects and the Institute of Medicine has estimated that treatment costs taxpayers ten times less than the current cost of addictions (1990). But, as evidenced by the high number of people who have been through treatment multiple times, the treatment system is falling short in terms of effectiveness for low-income single adults. For treatment to be most effective it must be readily available, tailored to the individual needs of patients, and part of a comprehensive program that addresses associated medical, psychological, education, training and other needs (NIDA, 1999).

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The front end of the substance abuse treatment continuum should be expanded to include harm reduction.* The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism studies have indicated the need to develop more flexible models of treatment including programs that focus on management of dependency rather than abstinence. A number of the job seekers interviewed reported failing in the traditional treatment system but continue to strive to reduce or stop using drugs or alcohol.

The city of San Francisco in 1997 instituted a “Treatment on Demand” (TOD) mandate, which is being implemented by the Department of Public Health’s Community Substance Abuse Services agency. Included in the TOD concept is an expansion of the treatment system to serve those who are unable to achieve abstinence right away. This type of expansion will be more tailored to meet the needs of many users who are not ready to completely stop but are ready to start getting help and addressing their problems. This earlier intervention can help decrease negative long-term health effects by helping people learn how to use safely and use less, as well as prevent other negative consequences such as loss of housing and employment.

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The back end of the treatment continuum should be expanded to include provision for housing.* Secure and stable housing plays a significant role in continued and successful participation in treatment programs (Sosin, 1994). Housing needs to be in place for people who are completing treatment and have no housing to return to, which is most often the case with low-income single adults.

**CONCLUSION 8: MULTI-BARRIERED NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS HAVE  
LIMITED CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENT CAPACITY**

**The capacity of low-income, multi-barriered non-custodial parents  
to pay child support is extremely limited.**

Sixty-six percent of the job seekers interviewed for this study had children, with the median number of children being two and 49 percent of the job seekers had children under age eighteen at the time of the interview (all were non-custodial parents). Over one-quarter of the non-custodial parents were providing financial support to the custodial parent at the time of the initial interview. Only 9.5 percent of them paid child support through the Illinois Department of Public Aid system, though an additional 17.6 percent of non-custodial parents provided money to the custodial parent whenever possible. The average monthly income for all the adults interviewed in this study was \$545, well below the poverty line for a one person household. Most non-custodial parents in this study cannot pay regular payments at this time but have shown effort by giving money when they can and providing support in other ways such as through provision of food or clothing.

There had been an increased focus nationally on the employment efforts of non-custodial parents. A subset of them is eligible for enrollment in Welfare to Work programs that provide employment services but strict eligibility guidelines have hindered recruitment and enrollment. A non-custodial parent is eligible if he:

1. is unemployed, underemployed or having difficulty paying child support obligations,
2. has minor children who are eligible for TANF, food stamps, SSI, Medicaid or the state children's health insurance program or have received TANF during the preceding year, and
3. enters into a personal responsibility plan which includes establishing paternity and paying child support (federal register, 4/12/99).

- ◆ **Recommendation:** *Child support enforcement agencies should develop a system to make the child support orders more reflective of the circumstances of non-custodial parent, including taking into account time spent incarcerated, employment status and barriers to employment.* The Center for Law and Social Policy has compiled a policy report on the payment of child support arrears by low-income parents. Some ideas for accommodations for states to consider include limiting interest on past due support, handling of prospective versus retroactive obligations, and modification of orders when the parent is unemployed or has an income drop (Roberts, 2001).
- ◆ **Recommendation:** *The eligibility of non-custodial parents for services using TANF funds and any new related funding should be revised.* The criteria for the non-custodial parent's participation should be related to gross income rather than the TANF eligibility of their children. If the non-custodial parents' income is less than 100% of the federal poverty level, they will have difficulty meeting their child support obligation. They should, therefore, be eligible to participate in programs that will enhance their economic status and the economic status of their children.

In summary, we have examined the challenge of enhancing the labor market prospects of multi-barriered job seekers with an eye toward the ways in which programs and policies interface to create possibilities and challenges for this group. The recommendations proposed here have depth and breadth as they address both program and policy issues, and range from local to federal jurisdiction in terms of decision making power. It is important to consider the associations between each of the policy recommendations we have proposed. In many cases, one recommendation will enhance job seeker self-sufficiency in conjunction with another. We hope the findings of this study and the accompanying policy recommendations will receive consideration by policy makers, elected officials, funders, agency directors and program operators. Ultimately, we look forward to achieving integration of single adults into the larger context of human services and workforce development systems.

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# Appendix A

The chart below provides demographic information about our initial and follow-up interview samples, as well as the samples used in two other studies of populations similar to ours. The first is a study of Food Stamp Program leavers in Illinois and the other is a study of poor, non-custodial fathers who do not pay child support.

In September 2000, the Urban Institute completed a study entitled “A Look At Poor Dads Who Don’t Pay Child Support” (Sorensen and Zibman, 2000). This study relied on data from the 1997 National Survey of America’s Families. Non-resident fathers were identified by an affirmative answer to the question, “Do you (or your partner) have children under the age of 18 who live outside this household?”

In January 2001, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. completed a study entitled “Food Stamp Leavers in Illinois: How Are They Doing Two Years Later?” (Rangarajan and Gleason, 2001). The study relied on Unemployment Insurance wage-reporting data and Illinois welfare records data to assess the economic status and overall well being of 10,001 people who received food stamps at some point between December 1996 and November 1997. Personal interviews were also conducted with a subset of the entire sample (497 people). Twenty-three percent of the overall sample consisted of able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDS).

In February 2001, the Urban Institute released a brief that focused on low-income ABAWDS without dependents, using data from the National Survey of America’s Families, a nationally representative survey of households, entitled ‘Prime Age Adults without Children or Disabilities: The “Least Deserving of the Poor” – or Are They?’ (Bell and Gallagher, 2001).

Finally, in December 1999, the Urban Institute released ‘Homelessness: Programs and the People they Serve’ (Burt et. al. 1999) which outlines findings from the 1996 National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients. This survey was designed to provide updated information about the providers of homeless assistance and the characteristics of homeless persons who use services. The survey is based on a statistical sample of 76 metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, including small cities and rural areas. Data for the survey were collected between October 1995 and November 1996.

While direct comparisons cannot be made because our sample was not randomly selected, we can make rough comparisons between our sample and the samples of the other two studies. Because these other samples are much larger than ours, such comparison allows us to put our sample in a larger context.

Certain discrepancies are quite apparent. First, while the vast majority of both our first and second interview samples were African American, only two-thirds of the able-bodied Food Stamp leavers without dependents and 40 to 41 percent of the poor non-custodial fathers and homeless were black. This difference is probably due to the fact that our sample came entirely

from the city of Chicago, which has a large low-income African American community, while the other samples were drawn from the state of Illinois and the entire country.

In addition, our sample is on average somewhat older than the other samples, though it may be similar to the homeless sample, though it is hard to say for certain as the data are presented differently. Our sample is just slightly better educated: while 68% of our first interview sample and 66% of our second interview sample had at least a high school diploma or GED, only 58% of the poor-non-custodial fathers and 64 percent of the homeless had reached that level of education. Unemployment among our follow-up sample was more prevalent than among the food stamp leavers and ABAWD samples and less prevalent than among the non-custodial fathers and homeless. Finally, substance abuse was much more common among our respondents.

|                                     | <i>Help<br/>Wanted<br/>Initial</i> | <i>Help<br/>Wanted<br/>Follow-up</i> | <b>Poor Non-Custodial<br/>Fathers<br/>1997</b> | <b>ABAWD<br/>Food stamp Leavers<br/>1997</b> | <b>Low-Income,<br/>ABAWDS<br/>1997</b> | <b>Single Homeless<br/>Clients<br/>1996</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
|                                     |                                    |                                      | Sorensen & Zibman, 2000                        | Rangarajan & Gleason, 2001                   | Bell & Gallagher, 2001                 | Burt, et. al., 1999                         |
| <b>Sample Size</b>                  | n = 146                            | n = 49                               | n = ?  | n = 2,315                                    | N=1390                                 | N=2473                                      |
| <b>Geographic Region</b>            | Chicago, IL                        | Chicago, IL                          | United States                                  | Illinois                                     | United States                          | United States                               |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>              |                                    |                                      |  |  |  |   |
| <i>African-American</i>             | 90%                                | 90%                                  | 41%  | 66%  | 13%                                    | 40%   |
| <i>Caucasian</i>                    | 6%                                 | 6%                                   | 39%  | 30%  | 63%                                    | 41%   |
| <i>Hispanic</i>                     | 3%                                 | 4%                                   | 17%  | 3%   | 18%                                    | 10%   |
| <i>Other</i>                        | 1%                                 | 0%                                   | 4%   | 1%   | 6%                                     | 9%  |
| <b>Gender:</b>                      |                                    |                                      |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Male</i>                         | 83%                                | 86%                                  | 100%   | 66%  | 59%                                    | 77%   |
| <i>Female</i>                       | 17%                                | 14%                                  | 0%   | 34%  | 41%                                    | 23%   |
| <b>Age Range:</b>                   |                                    |                                      |  |  |  |   |
| <i>18-21</i>                        | 2%                                 | 0%                                   |  |  |  |   |
| <i>22-25</i>                        | 3%                                 | 2%                                   |  |  |  | (under 25) 10%                              |
| <i>26-35</i>                        | 19%                                | 10%                                  |  | (19-34) 45%                                  | (25-34) 51%                            |   |
| <i>36-45</i>                        | 51%                                | 61%                                  |  |  | (35-44) 34%                            | (25 to 54) 81%                              |
| <i>46-60</i>                        | 25%                                | 27%                                  |  | (35-54) 55%                                  | (45-49) 16%                            | (55 or more) 9%                             |
| <i>Mean Age</i>                     | 40 years                           | 41.5 years                           | 36 years                                       | 35 years                                     |  |   |
| <b>Education:</b>                   |                                    |                                      |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Elementary</i>                   | 8%                                 | 12%                                  |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Some High School</i>             | 25%                                | 22%                                  | (< high school) 42%                            |  | (< high school) 19%                    | (< high school) 37%                         |
| <i>GED</i>                          | 22%                                | 20%                                  |  |  |  |   |
| <i>High School Diploma</i>          | 16%                                | 16%                                  | (high school or equiv) 56%                     |  |  | (high school or equiv) 36%                  |
| <i>Some College</i>                 | 30%                                | 29%                                  | 2%   |  |  | 28%   |
| <b>Employment Status:</b>           |                                    |                                      |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Employed</i>                     | 14%                                | 61%                                  | 42%  | 77%  | 77%                                    | 46%   |
| <i>Average Hourly Wage</i>          | \$6.97                             | \$7.44                               |  | \$7.20 <sup>29</sup>                         | 90% make < \$10.30                     |   |
| <i>Average Annual Income</i>        | \$179/mo                           | \$545/mo                             | (ave an earnings) \$5,570                      | \$4438                                       |  | \$348/month                                 |
| <i>No Health Insurance</i>          | 87%                                | 65%                                  | 60%  | over 2/3                                     | 54%                                    |   |
| <b>Parental Status:</b>             |                                    |                                      |  |  |  |   |
| <i>Non-Custodial Parent</i>         | 49%                                | 39%                                  | 100%   |  | 25%                                    |   |
| <i>Childless Adult</i>              | 51%                                | 61%                                  | 0%   |  |  |   |
| <b>Barriers to Employment:</b>      |                                    |                                      |  |  |  |   |
| <i>No car</i>                       | 98%                                | 96%                                  | 6%   |  |  |   |
| <i>Had not worked in past 3 yrs</i> | 32%                                | 14%                                  | 32%  |  |  |   |
| <b>Poor Health</b>                  | 32%                                |                                      | 42%  | 22%  |  |   |
| <i>Substance Abuse</i>              | 73%                                |                                      |  | 10%  |  | 68%   |

<sup>29</sup>Combination of current and previous hourly wage



## Appendix B: Program Details

# The Inner Voice

## *Overview of the Program*

The Inner Voice, Inc. opened in 1984 as a drop-in center on Chicago's west side with a mission to help individuals who were without shelter, food or clothing. Initially, Inner Voice provided a temporary refuge for the homeless during the day by serving hot meals from its soup kitchen and providing warm clothing for those in need. In 1991, the not-for-profit organization redirected its mission to resolving issues that create homelessness. Specifically, Inner Voice developed programs in education, training and housing assistance for men, women and families. The seven major programs that form the framework for the Inner Voice services are as follows:

- The Learning Center
- The Transitional Housing Program
- Veterans Transitional Housing Program
- The Warming Center Project
- Chicago Housing Authority/Inner Voice House Watch Program
- The Representative Payee/Program
- Shelter Plus Care Rental Assistance Program

## *Service Model and Structure*

The service structure begins with the initial client enrollment and continues through the referral and delivery of the appropriate services. After the client completes an initial application form for services an intake worker meets with him or her to complete a more detailed personal assessment. The assessment outcome determines the appropriate case manager and service(s) for the client. Case managers focus on particular service areas such as housing, education, general food/clothing assistance, or employment preparation.

People who are seeking employment have several options at Inner Voice. The employment services that are provided vary according the client's specific level of job readiness. After the initial assessment, the client is assessed further to determine his/her current level of educational competency, employment experience and job readiness. The client is then referred to either individual or program preparation.

With *individual preparation*, the client receives direction from the staff job specialist regarding resume preparation, interviewing skills and attire, budgeting, etc. Job leads are then provided and interviews are scheduled by the employment specialist. Once employment is secured, on-going guidance is provided as needed in the transition to employment.

Those clients referred to the *program preparation* participate in the job readiness workshop provided through operation H.E.L.P. (Homeless Employment Learning Program), a job readiness project. This workshop teaches job-search basics such as creating strategic career plans, developing resumes, and successful interviewing techniques. The workshop lasts for two weeks and is broken down into half-day sessions. Participants also have the option to participate in individual discussions with the instructor after the workshop, in order to complete personal resumes or to follow-up with other areas of preparation.

The employment specialist plays a key role in supporting clients whether they participate in the *individual* or *program preparation* process. This staff member has the dual role of providing direct assistance to the clients as well as developing and maintaining relationships with area employers.

Clients slotted for either *individual preparation* or *program preparation* have access to the Learning Center. At the Learning Center, clients are assisted by experienced case managers and certified addictions counselors in the development of self-sustaining objectives that lead the client to proper employment and permanent housing. The goal of this service model is to restore the clients' self-esteem and self-reliance through the provision of the necessary services that will support the clients' stated objectives.

Clients can receive a comprehensive array of employment and training services through the Learning Center. Instructors from Malcolm X College teach adult basic education and adult literacy in preparation for the GED test. Instructors also equip clients with hands-on office skills training through classes in computer word processing, Lotus 1-2-3, Windows, keyboarding and business English. To assist with employment preparation, the Learning Center offers access to Operation H.E.L.P. Clients can then be connected with potential employers through the Chicago JobNet, which shares information through a computer bulletin board. Clients can also receive job counseling and life skills assistance through The Employment Project. Supportive services such as housing assistance, medical and employment referrals and mail services also are offered.



# The Inner Voice

## Enrollment

Client signs in with office receptionist and completes initial application form for services.



## Intake

- Client is directed to an intake worker who implements the intake process with a personal assessment (includes information on health, housing, education, insurance, and other background information).
- Client is then referred to the appropriate staff counselor for one or more of the following requested services:

## Housing

Case managers assist the client with housing or shelter referrals (e.g. Transitional Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care Program).

## Education

- Client literacy level is assessed through TABE (Test for Adult Basic Education).
- Client directed to GED/adult education class or office skills training in the computer lab.

## Food & Clothing

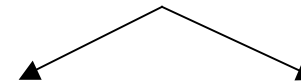
Emergency food and clothing are provided as needed.

## Counseling

Substance Abuse Counseling available from Certified Addictions Counselors.

## Employment Preparation

- Client is assessed for current level of basic educational skills, employment experience and job readiness by job counselor.
- Client is then referred to individual or program preparation.



## Job Search Support

- Client receives individual preparation advise from a job specialist regarding:
  - Resume preparation
  - Interviewing skills & attire
  - Budgeting
- Job leads are provided
- Interviews scheduled

## Job Readiness Workshop

- Operation H.E.L.P, a job readiness workshop, provides additional job preparation through job-search basics.
- Job bank leads are provided or client continues with job developer.



## Employment

On-going guidance provided as needed in the transition to employment

## Chicago Christian Industrial League<sup>30</sup>

### *Overview of the Program*

The Chicago Christian Industrial League (CCIL) is a non-for-profit, Christian, social service agency that serves homeless men, women, and children of all races and religions on behalf of the community of metropolitan Chicago. Founded in 1909, the League provides food, clothing, shelter, counseling and training experiences, as well as spiritual assistance for those who seek it. CCIL is located just west of the downtown Chicago in the Greektown neighborhood. All services are provided by professional staff in a supportive residential environment during a maximum 18-month time period.

The *core services* provided at CCIL are shelter, meals, individual counseling and group counseling. All CCIL participants receive these services. In addition, CCIL also provides *training and employment services* through an array of Ready-To-Work Services to assist residents in becoming autonomous upon graduation. These services include: job readiness training, skill training, job development services, job retention training, and adult education:

- Job readiness training offers participants a range of tools to facilitate a successful job search. Job search support is provided through resume preparation, interview arrangements, and career mapping. Workplace values are identified and reinforced.
- Skill training is provided through corporate partnerships with ServiceMaster and ARAMARK in three separate programs: Landscape Services, Housekeeping and Food Service. Trainees learn specific technical skills and current industry standards and procedures.
- Job development services are provided to assist residents in identifying available employment. Established relationships with local businesses create an important link to open positions. Job fairs are scheduled with area employers to provide networking and placement opportunities for residents.
- Job retention training teaches skills to successfully resolve common workplace conflicts, while emphasizing workplace values that are essential to keeping a job.
- Educational services address the academic aspects of returning to work through individual instruction, small classes, volunteer tutoring, and a computer learning center. Learning is focused on successful functioning in the workplace, both in terms of general work ethics and specific occupational interests.

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<sup>30</sup> This program model changed as of May, 2000. The old program model is presented here as the participants who were interviewed took part in the old service model.

## ***Service Model***

A program “level system” is utilized to provide residents with a structured environment in which to function and a clear set of standards for movement through the established program structure. The intent of the model is to give residents maximum structure at the beginning of their stay in the League and less structure as residents progress towards the successful completion of their established program. While the staff works with all residents at all levels, the primary goal for each resident is to be completely autonomous upon graduation.

The initial orientation period occurs within the first 30-45 days of entry. The general intake procedures, orientation, and assessment all lead to the development of a service plan. Work assignments are initiated during this period to help the residents establish proper work habits. There are three fundamental levels within the system after the initial orientation period.

**Level One** begins after the orientation phase, at approximately the thirty-day mark, and focuses on mandatory core service requirements. These services include:

- Education services (GED)
- Personal development training (Adaptive Skills, Time/Stress Management, Money Management, and Effective Parenting)
- Pre-employment training
- Enhancement services as required (Credit Repair, Criminal History Repair, Budgeting, Basic Computers)

**Level Two** focuses on optional skills training services, beginning at the six-month mark. Three skills training programs are provided:

- Landscape Services
- Housekeeping
- Food Service

Additional skill training opportunities are currently being developed in the retail and offices services arena, which will provide new areas for skill development.

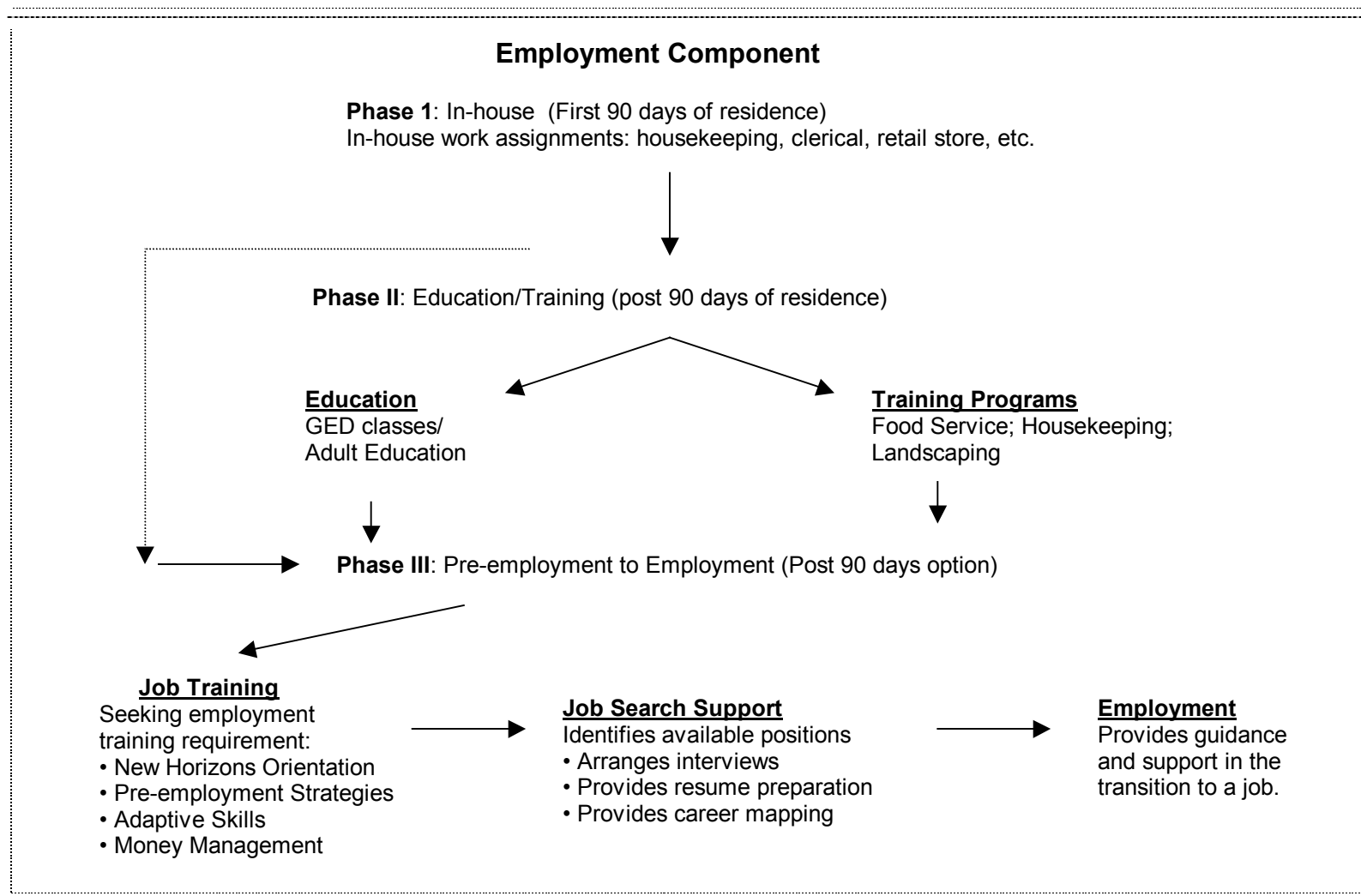
**Level Three** focuses on employment services and may also begin after the initial six-month period, unless residents begin a skills-training program at this point instead. The employment services focus on the following areas:

- Career planning and employment preparation
- Job placement
- Workplace support
- Employment tracking

# Chicago Christian Industrial League

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# The Employment Project

## *Overview of the Program*

Established in 1994, The Employment Project (TEP) is a non-profit organization that is working toward solving the problem of homelessness by helping clients find employment. TEP's mission is to help adults who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, gain stability through employment. Recognizing the multiple barriers homeless people face in gaining stability, TEP works collaboratively with community organizations to create a network of services that address the diverse needs of people who are homeless. Operating on-site at homeless shelters throughout the city, bringing their job readiness, job placement and job retention services to their clients.

## *Service Model & Structure*

To help participants overcome personal barriers and move into the workforce, TEP provides the following services:

### **Case Coordination:**

When a program participant first enrolls in TEP, a TEP Case Coordinator conducts a needs assessment to obtain a 'snap shot' of employability. Based on this assessment, the participant and the TEP Case Coordinator together create a work plan that identifies barriers to employment, goals towards overcoming these barriers, and target dates by which to achieve the planned goals. Case Coordinators and participants meet and modify the work plan monthly. During Intake, TEP staff works with shelter staff as a case management team, providing participants with the tools they need - - such as substance abuse counseling, medical and mental health care - - to overcome obstacles to employment.

### **Employment Preparation Training:**

TEP provides a four-week employment preparation training course on-site at shelters. The first two weeks of the training focus on managing everyday life and include workshops on self-esteem, communications skills, career planning, money management, and goal setting. The last two weeks prepare participants to become successful job hunters and focus on teaching job search skills, networking, interviewing and resume writing. A total of 50 hours of employment preparation training are provided. This program lays the groundwork participants need to re-enter the job market, explore long term career options, and identify areas that will require additional skills training.

### **Education/Job Training**

Program participants who desire additional education or training in specialized fields are linked to appropriate community agencies by TEP staff. This program is used by participants whose housing situation allows them the option of long term career planning as well as by those who continue employment counseling with TEP while working at an entry level job to meet their immediate need for income.

### **Job Search Support**

When program participants have completed employment preparation training, they meet with TEP's job search support staff to identify realistic employment and career goals. Participants meet regularly with the job search staff to update their progress towards meeting their employment goals, to enhance their interviewing skills and to follow up on job leads. Recognizing that few entry level or minimum wage jobs can provide complete economic stability, and in anticipation of ever-increasing competition for these jobs, TEP has made a commitment to work with participants for as long as they need assistance. A career is made up of many jobs, and TEP works with participants so that they can continue to get job leads in their chosen field and move up the ladder.

### **Employer Relationships**

TEP brings employers into the program either as trainers or by meeting with them to describe the realities of hiring homeless adults and the support TEP can provide in the process. By building relationships over time with employers, TEP hopes to help them resolve some of their most basic concerns about hiring adults who are homeless.

### **Work-Adjustment Employment**

TEP has established two rotating part-time positions, Program Assistant and Trainer Assistant, which employ TEP program participants, providing them with income and paid work experience for up to 18 months. To date, they have employed eight participants in work adjustment positions: three participants have moved into full time employment outside of TEP, two have been hired into permanent staff positions at TEP, and one is currently employed in the work adjustment position. All six of these have moved into stable housing.

### **Volunteer Mentorship Program**

TEP involves the greater Chicago community in its work through 20 volunteer mentors who bridge the gap between our program participants and the working world. Mentors are career people from all walks of life who are trained to assist participants in all aspects of their individual development, job search and transition into employment.

### **Community Voice Mail System**

To help phoneless and homeless individuals enter the working world more quickly, TEP launched Community Voice Mail (CVM), a 24-hour message taking and retrieval system. CVM provides a private, individual phone number and free message retrieval to up to 1,000 persons at one time. Since the launching of CVM, agencies report their participants are finding employment in half the time it took them prior to having a phone number.

### **Work-It-Out Helpline**

The Work-It-Out Helpline is a free 800 number resource for entry-level workers and newly employed participants who have questions about how to handle situations that arise on the job. Staffed by volunteers who are trained in active listening, retention and transition issues, the helpline offers problems solving assistance, resource information and support.

# The Employment Project

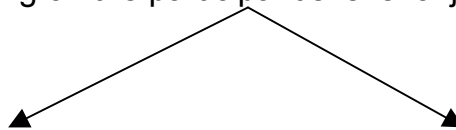
## Enrollment

A homeless person meets with TEP staff who assess that person's situation and helps him/her create a plan of action



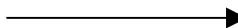
## Pre-Employment Training

**Participant enrolls in a four-week session that concentrates in Daily Living Skills Training** (goal-setting, money management, etc...) and Job Readiness Training (resume preparation, interview techniques, etc...) Then, depending on the participant's level of job-readiness, he/she will move to:



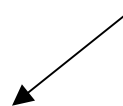
## Education & Job Training

TEP refers participants to schools and job training programs



## Job Search Support

- Participant receives personal advice from a TEP mentor
- Help with developing better career goal planning and job search strategy.
- Good job leads



## Employment

TEP guidance in the transition to employment

## **The Paternal Involvement Project**

### *Overview of the Program*

The Paternal Involvement Project (PIP) began in 1990 as a public/private partnership to demonstrate effective ways of helping non-custodial fathers. PIP is housed at Kennedy-King College on the south side of Chicago. The successes of the partnership led to the establishment of a permanent program that is designed to meet the needs of low-income, non-custodial fathers who want to be involved in the lives of their children. The organization's purpose is to strengthen fragile families by promoting the responsibilities and rewards of fatherhood. PIP acts as a catalyst for creating family-centered public policies, reducing welfare cost, increasing tax revenues from employed fathers and improving developmental outcomes for poor children.

### *Service Model & Structure*

The Paternal Involvement service delivery model represents a mix of services in five key areas:

- family development (parenting)
- pre-employment training and job placement
- continuing education support
- legal assistance
- public policy

### **Parenting Sessions**

PIP embraces the philosophy of 'sharing knowledge' in the hopes that the skills and lessons learned from life experiences will lead participants toward becoming better parents. Sessions cover such topics as positive role modeling, effective communication with children, learning to effectively play with children and child development. They all illustrate the critical role that parents play in the lives of their children.

### **Pre-Employment Training And Job Placement**

Employment related assistance provided by the staff counselor includes job readiness and retention skill development, job placement assistance, on the job support, and career development. Supportive services continue for six months after a job is secured.

A critical focus of the employment component is the training provided. The goal of PIP's employment training is to help men develop a well-rounded approach to employment search and career development. Through classroom study and real world assignments, the classes demonstrate how to navigate every phase of finding and maintaining employment. Emphasis is placed on identifying career objectives and developing the skills necessary to find employment that allows fathers to support themselves and their families in a fulfilling and dignified manner.



The job readiness training sessions extend through a period of approximately four weeks. There is open enrollment but each person must complete twelve required sessions. Classes are held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Participants also have individual counseling sessions to complement the classroom information.

The specific topic areas covered in the job readiness training sessions include:

- *Resume Development:* participants are assisted in writing out their employment history and in developing resumes and preparing for interviews.
- *Application Development:* participants develop a working application that they can use to fill out other applications as the need arises.
- *Thinking, Learning and Change:* Participants prioritize their job duties for the various jobs they have held and describe the kinds of learning, thinking and change that occurred as a result of performing the job.
- *Interviewing Skills:* Participants practice relating previous employment activities to interviewers in a comfortable, conversational manner.
- *Employment Background Review:* Participants begin to think about their employment histories and to develop strategies for responding to employers. This includes such areas as gaps in employment history, criminal backgrounds, high number of jobs, few jobs, etc.
- *Introduction to Job Club:* Participants are introduced to skills that will aid them in finding and securing employment opportunities.
- *Contact/Follow-up Maintenance Skills:* Participants review and practice the proper employer contact and follow-up skills. There is also discussion around the reasons for job loss in their work histories and strategies for maintaining employment.
- *Pulling it all Together:* Participants review the whole process of finding, acquiring and maintaining employment.

### **Alumni Leadership & Support Groups**

After completion of the program, participants may also receive continued assistance through the alumni leadership and support groups. The goal of these sessions is to enhance the leadership opportunities and personal development of program participants, families and community members. The sessions are held on two evenings during the month. Discussion topics include: business and community development; understanding roles and responsibilities; financial and time management; and personal goal setting.

### **Continuing Education Support**

The education component of PIP provides short and long-term support for the fathers continuing their education in a variety of ways. Men are linked with programs to help them secure a high school diploma or GED as well as with training programs, on the job training opportunities and apprenticeship programs.

# The Parental Involvement Project

## Enrollment

Participant meets with case manager and completes the initial registration form. General background information is requested, along with contact names, health assessment, children information and other parent information.

## Intake

- Participant meets with a case manager for the initial assessment and service plan around the program service(s) requested.
- Participant is then referred to one or more of the following service areas under the respective case manager.

### Family Development (Parenting)

Family development activities include a comprehensive parenting program and a monthly leisure or educational family outing.

#### Education

Continuing education includes placement in GED and adult education courses within the community college system and vocational counseling.

#### Legal

Legal advocacy includes voluntary paternity establishment, rights and responsibilities, and child support obligations.

### Employment

Employment related assistance includes job readiness and retention skills, job placement assistance, on the job support, and career development.

#### *Job Readiness Training Topics (covered in 12 sessions)*

- Introduction to employment
- Resumes
- Applications
- Thinking, Learning, Change
- Interviewing
- Employment Histories
- Job Club
- Contact & Follow-up

### Alumni Leadership & Support Groups

- Ongoing sessions held twice each month (includes a meeting and workshop topic)
- Individual meetings with staff to be scheduled
- Periodic alumni activities

## Rose Garden Community Services, Inc.<sup>31</sup>

### *Overview of Program*

The Rose Garden Community Services, Inc., (RG) is a not-for-profit community based organization. Rose Garden has offices in the Roseland neighborhood on the far south side of Chicago, in the Auburn-Gresham neighborhood on the south side, in the Humboldt Park neighborhood on the Westside and in Harvey, a southern suburb. The mission is to assist underprivileged persons in the enhancement of their quality of life, an enhancement they believe begins with stable employment. RG is funded by the state government and private foundations to provide subsidized employment for the unemployed who meet program eligibility criteria. With this funding Rose Garden operates a Work First Program and an Earnfare Program. Serving a large population of long term TANF recipients and unemployed people who have been laid off and have exhausted unemployment benefits, the Rose Garden seeks to help clients identify and secure other realistic employment goals and obtain employment.

### *Service Model & Structure*

Each client is assigned a counselor to assist him or her in pursuit of employment. The counselor identifies the client's employment goals and the types of assistance needed to enable the client to meet those goals.

The client is placed in a subsidized employment position to obtain the necessary on-the-job training in his or her chosen employment field. Each client is considered as a trainee or probationary employee by the employer. There are over 2,000 positions with over 300 employers open to the clients. Earnfare clients are paid for 80 hours per month at the prevailing minimum wage. They also receive food stamps.

Work First clients are either TANF recipients with children aged 13+ or TANF participants who need to build their job skills. The goal of the program is to help recipients get the work experience necessary so that they can move into paid employment. Recipients have to work at least 20 hours per week, and at most 40 hours per week. The number of hours is calculated by adding a family's TANF amount + food stamp benefit amount + TANF or food stamp recoupment amounts divided by the minimum wage (\$5.15). Recipients work in off their benefits payments in a subsidized employment position.

### **Optional Workshops**

RG also offers workshops and seminars to enhance their clients' employability, and can link them with needed educational components. The workshops are optional and include:

- *Job Search/Job Readiness:* This workshop takes the client through the interview and hiring process. The program is structured to instill confidence and motivate the

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<sup>31</sup> Agency is no longer in existence as of May, 2000

participant. The program utilizes mock interviews and role-playing to prepare the student for real life job search situations.

- *Applications & Resumes:* This workshop provides instruction on completing applications and developing resumes. It also provides students with employment resources.
- *Life Skills:* This workshop provides the client with information about money management, stress and coping skills, time management, and goal setting.
- *Support Group:* Utilizing the 12-step approach, RG provides group sessions and activities to help prevent or address substance abuse issues that inhibit clients from maintaining full time employment.
- *Parenting:* Utilizing the Strategic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) format, this program works with participants to increase their knowledge of parenting, improve relationships in their families, improve their communication with their children, and decrease conflicts with their children.
- *Grooming & Hygiene:* This workshop provides instruction in personal cleanliness and maintenance to promote the appropriate personal and business appearance. The workshop also addresses nutrition and related health issues. Grooming and hygiene kits are distributed at the workshop.
- *Free Hair Cuts:* Available to all program participants on the last Monday of each month.

### **Education Workshops**

- *TABE Prep:* This class is designed to prepare students to take the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE). This test is a pre-enrollment requirement for all of RG's vocational courses. The workshop provides the student with test taking techniques and practice exercises.
- *GED Prep:* This class is designed to provide basic instruction and assistance to students who wish to take the GED examination. Successful completion of the GED exam results in a high school equivalency certificate from the state of Illinois.
- *Literacy Tutoring:* This program provides one-on-one tutoring for students who wish to improve basic reading, writing and mathematics skills or who are attempting to raise their GED and TABE test scores.

### **Vocational Courses**

Rosegarden also offers a range of vocational courses. These include training for the jobs of food service and sanitation, unarmed security officer, truck driver, certified nurse's assistant, bank teller and auto alarm installation.

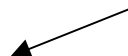
### **Social Support**

Additional supports offered include transportation fare for travel to and from work, housing referrals, and clothing and eyeglasses referrals.

# Rose Garden Community Services, Inc.

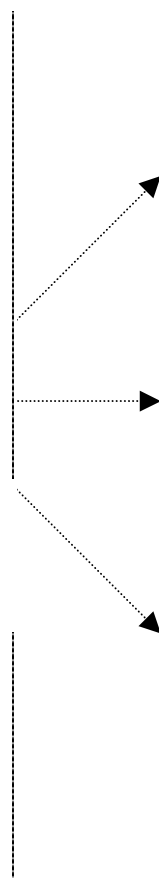
## Intake

Client is directed to an intake worker who determines if the client is eligible for Earnfare (6 month time limit per year) or Work First (**Time limit???**). If eligible, client is then assigned a counselor who performs a personal assessment and outlines employment goals as well as identifies barriers to employment.



## Subsidized Employment Placement

- Client is offered work experience training in an employment setting in the field of their choice. There are over 2000 positions offered by over 300 employers to choose from.
- Clients are paid (by the state of Illinois via Rose Garden, not by the employer), during work experience training for up to 80 hours per month at the prevailing minimum wage in addition to food stamps. Worker must bring completed and signed time sheet to Rose Garden in order to be paid.
- If necessary, client is provided transportation fare assistance to and from work assignment
- Client continues to be matched with an individual counselor to help client reach identified employment goals.



### **Skills Workshops**

*topics include:*

- Job Search/Job Readiness
- Applications & Resume
- Life Skills
- Support Group
- Parenting
- Grooming & Hygiene

### **Education Workshops**

*topics include:*

- TABE Prep
- GED Prep
- Literacy Tutoring

### **Vocational Training Courses**

*topics include:*

- Food Service and Sanitation
- Unarmed Security Officer
- Truck Driver
- Certified Nurses Assistant
- Bank Teller
- Auto Alarm Installation

# Appendix C

## Definition of disability in accordance with the Social Security Act, as amended

(d)(1) The term "disability" means--

(A) inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months; or

(B) in the case of an individual who has attained the age of 55 and is blind (within the meaning of "blindness" as defined in section 216(i)(1)), inability by reason of such blindness to engage in substantial gainful activity requiring skills or abilities comparable to those of any gainful activity in which he has previously engaged with some regularity and over a substantial period of time.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (1)(A)--

(A) An individual shall be determined to be under a disability only if his physical or mental impairment or impairments are of such severity that he is not only unable to do his previous work but cannot, considering his age, education, and work experience, engage in any other kind of substantial gainful work which exists in the national economy, regardless of whether such work exists in the immediate area in which he lives, or whether a specific job vacancy exists for him, or whether he would be hired if he applied for work. For purposes of the preceding sentence (with respect to any individual), "work which exists in the national economy" means work which exists in significant numbers either in the region where such individual lives or in several regions of the country.

(B) In determining whether an individual's physical or mental impairment or impairments are of a sufficient medical severity that such impairment or impairments could be the basis of eligibility under this section, the Commissioner of Social Security shall consider the combined effect of all of the individual's impairments without regard to whether any such impairment, if considered separately, would be of such severity. If the Commissioner of Social Security does find a medically severe combination of impairments, the combined impact of the impairments shall be considered throughout the disability determination process.

(C) An individual shall not be considered to be disabled for purposes of this title if alcoholism or drug addiction would (but for this subparagraph) be a contributing factor material to the Commissioner's determination that the individual is disabled.

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